# Workers' Liberty

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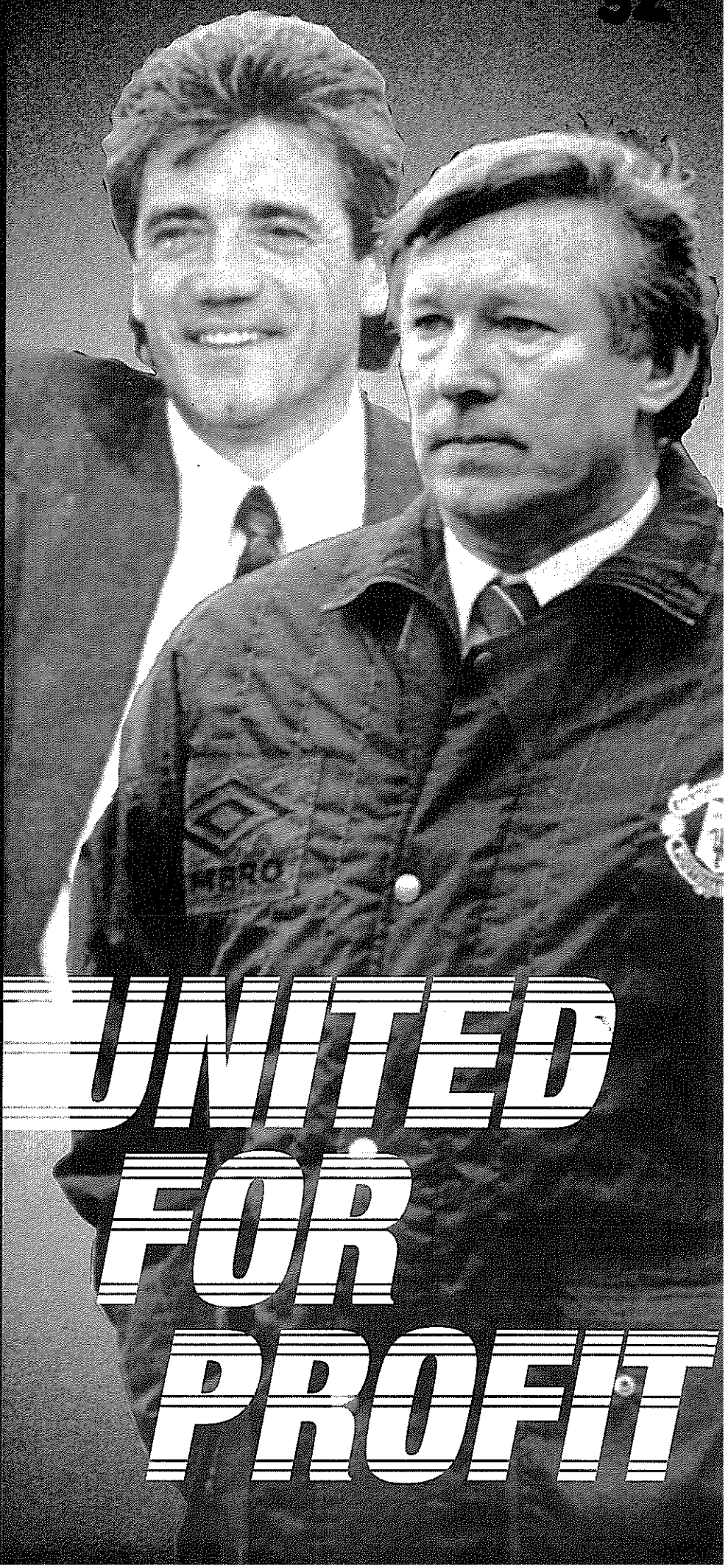

# UNITED FOR PROFIT

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Workers' Liberty

"The emancipation of the working class must be conquered by the working class itself."

"The emancipation of the working class is also the emancipation of all human beings without distinction of race or sex"

Karl Marx

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# Sales for the summer

Eight copies of Workers' Liberty were sold at a special showing of Ken Loach's film *Land and Freedom* in Hackney on 30 May, and a few more at another showing in Clerkenwell on 20 May.

By seeking out events of interest related to major articles in the magazine, like the feature on the Spanish Civil War in no.26, we can boost sales and find extra readers. This issue should create new opportunities to reach out, with the features on football and on William Morris.

We will be selling *Workers' Liberty* on the queues for the William Morris exhibition which opened at the Victoria and Albert museum in London in May, and at other Morris centenary events this year.

For the football feature, the obvious sales focus is the Euro '96 matches, but it should also be possible to interest friends and workmates who will watch the games on television. It will be useful to us at the Workers' Liberty office if readers who are football fans can tell us about local football magazines which might take an advertisement for *WL*.

Nine new Workers' Liberty subscriptions were sold at the National Union of Teachers conference at Easter. We hope that readers attending other union conferences in the next month or so — MSF, UNISON, RMT, etc. — will take that as a model.

Students who have been reading the magazine regularly over the academic year will be leaving college soon, for the summer or for good: AWL student organisers are asked to make sure that these students are approached to take out subscriptions before they leave.

*Martin Thomas*


# Northern Ireland: will talks bring a solution?

THE results of Northern Ireland's 30 May elections are not known as we go to press. Representatives of those elected are to start in the "all party" negotiations due to start on 10 June.

The main nationalist party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party, will certainly take part, representing the Catholics. However large a vote it wins, Provisional Sinn Fein will not be allowed to take part in the talks unless the Provisional IRA declares a new ceasefire. An indefinite ceasefire does not seem likely, but it is not impossible. On page 10, we print the account by Gerry Adams of Sinn Fein of the issues and the obstacles. Does he present the issues honestly and comprehensively? And what are the prospect s for the talks starting in June?

In theory, the people of Northern Ireland could now proceed to work out a way of living together and begin to create appropriate new institutions and structures. In practice, however, the differences between the extremes of the two communities remain vast and unbridgeable. It is unlikely that the extreme poles of Unionism and nationalism will be so small a part of either community that a middle ground consensus will emerge, uniting enough of the two communities to shape events.

This is not the first such assembly in Northern Ireland's recent history: something like it was set up in the early 1980s, and there was the Constitutional Assembly in 1975 and '76. The gaps proved unbridgeable. We are about to learn whether there has been sufficient movement for something new to emerge now. It is a good point to take stock.

For a generation, the Six Counties has been in a state of latent, and sometimes simmering, civil war, kept at bay only by the British army, which has often behaved with great savagery against the Catholics.

When that army "went in", on 13 August 1969, Northern Ireland had already broken down and fallen apart into the beginnings of outright civil war. The army "froze" the situation. That is what it is still doing.

In August 1969 there was a Home Rule government in Belfast. Run by Protestants and Unionists, it had an armed police force, the RUC, and a large force of armed special constables, the B-Specials, which was in fact an army. The RUC was overwhelmingly Protestant in composition; the B-Specials, entirely and jealously Protestant — a sectarian militia, in fact.

The Catholics, second class citizens for fifty years, were unarmed, except for stones, improvised petrol bombs, and an illegal gun here and there. In Derry and Belfast in August 1969, those Catholics fought the forces of the Protestant state and freelance Protestant sectarian mobs. Only a very feeble and shadowy IRA existed and it had long ago disarmed. It played no important part in the fighting. The present IRA came later, a product of impasse.

In Derry, police, B-Specials and civilian sectarians tried to invade the Bogside — a Catholic ghetto outside the walls of Derry City — where they had, some months earlier, beaten one man, Samuel Devenny, to death during a police riot. The Catholics resisted, built barricades to keep them out, and used stones and petrol bombs — against guns — to deter them.

They beat them. Weeping and hysterical policemen, unused to resistance from the despised "Taigs", retreated from the conflict with the angry Bogsiders.

When the fighting spread to Belfast, where some hundreds of Catholic families were burned out of their homes, and seemed to be on the point of spreading to other towns, the British army was sent in to act like an iron scaffolding, holding things together. ▸

The army presence, ostentatiously welcomed by the Catholics, was seen by the British Labour government as a short-term affair, while emergency reforms were rushed through aimed at satisfying the indisputably just demands of the Catholics.

Reforms were quickly made in the electoral system; the RUC was disarmed, the sectarian special constables disbanded; British civil servants were sent to understudy their sectarian-tinged Northern Irish equivalents and ensure "fair play" for the Catholics. A better Northern Ireland seemed in the making.

But it was all illusion. Less than a year on from August 1969, when Catholics welcomed British soldiers with the much-referred-to cups of tea, the IRA, now split in two and revitalised, fought a gun battle with the British army in West Belfast.

A few months later, in February-March 1971, the newly-formed Provisional IRA launched an all-out military campaign. Two years on, in August 1971, the British and Northern Ireland authorities brought in internment without charge or trial — exclusively for Catholics.

Less than three years on, in March 1972, Britain scrapped the Belfast Home Rule parliament and assumed direct rule.

In May 1974, a General Strike brought down the Catholic-Protestant power-sharing government which had been set up as a short-lived replacement for the Protestant Home Rule government which Britain had been forced to scrap. It has been British direct rule ever since.

What went wrong for the Labour government hopes in 1969 of a new start in Northern Ireland? The Northern Irish sub-state proved unreformable. The convulsions of 1969 were not a passing difficulty, but a terminal breakdown of the Partition settlement imposed in 1920-22.

It has so far proved impossible to put Northern Ireland back together again as it was before August 1969. Britain does not dare let the Protestant Unionists rule themselves in the state set up to give them Home Rule!

Since 1969 Britain, using very savage repression against the Catholics where necessary, has held together the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. If Britain were to go without a political settlement, Northern Ireland would dissolve into sectarian civil war and the Six Counties would be redivided between Catholics and Protestants. It is not at all clear that Britain is within sight now of a political settlement, even with the active involvement of the USA.

Ireland's basic problem, coming out of centuries of terrible oppression by Britain, was that its natural majority and minority, Catholic/Gaelic majority and Protestant/"British", did not reach a modus vivendi, but had their relations warped by a British "solution" which imposed a brutally unjust and unviable partition.

That is the root of the present situation in Northern Ireland. The Six-Counties entity is a blatant piece of nonsense. Northern Ireland long ago broke down. It has been kept in being — and murderous sectarian civil war staved off — only by the power and the inertia of the British state, at a tremendous cost to Northern Ireland's people, Catholic and Protestant.

Since 1972 Britain have accepted a Catholic veto on Northern Ireland majority rule because they know from experience that majority rule will be, or quickly become, sectarian rule. The Protestants have again and again rejected British attempts to set up a constitutionally guaranteed system of Catholic-Protestant power-sharing. We will soon know if enough of them have changed their minds about that.

What makes the Northern Ireland entity untenable is the sheer size of the Catholic-Nationalist-Republican minority it contains. Never less than 33%, it is now 45% and growing fast, while the Protestant-Unionist population is shrinking.

Yet to pretend that the issues in Northern Ireland, for either community, can be reduced to the question of a majority and a minority, to undifferentiated head-counting, is to ignore what is important there. The Tories do not believe it — so their rejection of Northern Ireland majority rule tells us, despite what they say.

Northern Ireland's Catholics have always rejected such an approach, in pursuit of something they consider greater and more important — their national identity.

So, in the past, when Ireland was part of a common state with Great Britain, did the people of Catholic Ireland behave towards the "UK majority" when it denied them their national rights.

So, in the future, would the Six-Counties Protestants behave if they found themselves a locked-in and coerced minority in an all-Ireland state, or (and it is not fantastic) if they one day find themselves a minority in the Six Counties.

For a quarter of a century, Northern Ireland has not worked according to the majority/minority model of states where the citizens share a common national identity. In fact, it never worked according to that pattern. For 50 years it was a one-party sectarian dictatorship. Then it broke down. Without the British Army, intra-Irish civil war would have bloodily redrawn the political map of Ireland and torn Northern Ireland into its component parts.

Despite the official Tory-Unionist rhetoric which is still occasionally mouthed, the British state long ago declared, in solemn official documents like the Sunningdale Agreement of 1973, and the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985, that it would not stand against Irish unity if the Irish wanted it.

Gerry Adams's studied reasonableness is, in contrast, a fake. The Provisional IRA has in fact been altogether more dogmatic and inflexible than the British government. They have demanded a unitary Irish state with no provision for the Protestant-Unionists as a distinct people. All the "reasonableness" is strictly within that framework.

This position has expressed not a proper Irish Republican viewpoint, but a narrower communal viewpoint of the Six-Counties Catholics — who would still be a minority in any autonomous Protestant area and can only hope to escape that if the Protestants are locked as a minority into an all-Ireland state without self-rule on any level.

*"The solution is simply stated, but, while Ireland's workers are divided along sectarian lines, far from simple to achieve: a federal united Ireland."*

Twenty-five years ago, the Provisional IRA launched a military campaign whose basic premise was the threadbare traditional right-wing Catholic "Republican" dogma, that Northern Ireland is nothing other than "British-occupied Ireland". Even from themselves, they hide the reality that one million people in Ireland oppose Irish unity behind indignation against Britain and Britain's towering blame in Irish history. They made war not fundamentally on Britain, but on the Northern Ireland Protestant-Unionists and only incidentally on Britain.

After a 17 month ceasefire (August 1994-February 1996) they have returned to the gun. During the ceasefire, they had demanded "all-party talks", meaning in practice that the British should proceed without the representatives of the Six Counties majority, who would have boycotted those talks. Now Sinn Fein is to be excluded. They should not be.

We think that the Provisional IRA should call off its futile and counterproductive military campaign. But unless radical changes are made in the state structures in Ireland — in practical terms that means, unless the new Assembly can work out a broadly acceptable way of living together for Northern Irish people, Catholic and Protestant — any peace will be illusory. And at present Northern Ireland lacks even so much as a labour party striving to unite workers with a programme that includes consistent democracy for both communities.

The basic solution is socialism. Immediately the solution is simply stated, but, while Ireland's workers are divided along sectarian lines, far from simple to achieve: a federal united Ireland, with self-rule for the Protestant majority areas, coupled with closer, perhaps confederal, links between the UK and independent Ireland to reassure the Irish minority. If the present conflict ends with less than that, then it will probably prove to be just a lull in the long, long war.

# John Major's "beef war"

By Alan Gilbert

THE Tory Government has been walking wounded since the Exchange Rate Mechanism crisis of September 1992, when John Major and his government blew £10 billion on an economic policy and then trashed it a few days later. Their desperate lunge on 21 May 1996 confirmed that this government is still no more able to map a straight course than the unfortunate cows at the centre of its latest trouble.

After seven members of a European Union committee of veterinary experts blocked relaxation of the EU's ban on exports of British beef and beef products, John Major announced that Britain would refuse to cooperate with any EU business.

Who knows, Major may even be so dimwitted and short-sighted that he still thinks he has been clever, or even that this affair can win an election for him as the Falklands war of 1982 won the 1983 election for Margaret Thatcher. If so, he is wrong.

Though it is dwindling and aging, there is still a pool of anti-German bigotry in the Tory Party and in the country, shown when Thatcher had to sack her close ally Nicholas Ridley for raving openly about the European Union being "a German racket." But calls from both the Thatcherite right and the Stalinistic left to rally against a "German-dominated Europe" have less and less grip.

As Hugo Young noted in the *Guardian*, "people do not ignore reality, and Sunday's [27 May] *Observer* poll emphatically confirms it. The hysteria of... the tabloids has [not] blinded voters to the fact that BSE originated as a British problem, was intensified by the deregulatory passion of Thatcherism, rouses the understandable anxiety of Europeans who want to avoid getting it, and has been handled with the crassest incompetence by present ministers".

Besides, Thatcher won the Falklands war, although at terrible cost. There is no flag-waving victory to be won in the "beef war". The ban would have been eased anyway, bit by bit; it will probably be eased later as a result of Major's defiant gesture, not earlier. In the meantime he has blocked EU measures which the British government wanted — and worsened the deep-going divisions over Europe in the Tory party.

The Thatcherite section of the Tory party, and a (minority) sector of the British capitalist class, wants Britain to be a cheap offshore site for production and financial dealings, reliant on foreign investment from the US and Asia, linked only loosely to Europe, and operating with markedly lower wages and social overheads than Europe. The wing of the Tory party represented by Heseltine and Clarke, and the majority of the British capitalist class, believe that British capitalism has no future outside an increasingly integrated capitalist Europe.

The conflict is profound, and especially dangerous because it can be accelerated by European schedules over which no Tory politician has much control. The "beef war" has sharpened it. Within a few days, some Tories were telling the press: "Beef is the pathfinding issue, but it's not the end of the road. We must now make a habit of using the British veto". On the other side, some Tory ministers let it be known that they were pressing for the non-cooperation to be ended. One wearily told the *Financial Times*: "We will show the typical John Major style. Bluster. Attack. Dither. Retreat".

Bryan Nicholson, president of the bosses' federation, the CBI, lambasted "romantic nationalism and churlish xenophobia".

The only saving factor for Major is the feebleness of the Labour leadership. Plainly they were never going to respond in a working-class way, for example by counterposing Labour and trade-union non-cooperation with the Tories. But they chose to launch a pro-EU policy document just a few days into the "beef war". Would they oppose the Tories outright even on that basis? Oh dear no! They were not against non-cooperation "in the national interest", as long as there was proper "consultation", of course...

And for the 36,000 workers who so far, on the TGWU's calculations, have lost their jobs through the beef crisis, Labour had not a word.



*Towards a summer of discontent?*

# Rail and post go into battle

By Tom Willis

THE result of the postal workers' strike ballot should be known by the time you read this article. Both the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) and management expect a large majority for action. Barring legal challenges or a fresh offer which forces a re-ballot, all is set for a series of weekly one-day strikes in June. These will be followed by an all-out indefinite strike if Royal Mail management don't back down.

The ballot is the culmination of a prolonged war of attrition in Royal Mail. Up and down the country management have been trying it on, particularly over disciplinaries. They have been met by a series of unofficial walk-outs and guerrilla actions. In recent months there have been "wild-cat" strikes in Liverpool, Manchester, Newport, St Helens, London and Scotland over victimisations and attacks on working conditions.

Last November's Scottish postal strike, affecting most of the country, was about the defence of just four full-time jobs. It was the biggest unofficial and illegal strike since the Second World War.

The moving force behind all this is Royal Mail management's attempt to ratchet up the levels of exploitation of post office workers. Central to their offensive, and the immediate focus for the strike ballot is the "Employee Agenda".

The Employee Agenda proposes the introduction of team working and will undermine union workplace power, increase casualisation and part-time working and abolish seniority to replace it with the blue-eyed boys and girls syndrome.

The union has responded by demanding a shorter working week of 35 hours and five days — postal workers work a six-day week — and the maintenance of the second delivery and guaranteed job security.

There is a danger that CWU joint General Secretary, Alan Johnson, who has been forced into this dispute by pressure from below, will be prepared to make concessions on one set of issues in return for management backing down on others. The union apparatus may try to ram through a deal which involves concessions over teamworking and which would lead to postal workers competing against each other to work faster and faster. Head office have suggested to local reps that the press and public are "not interested in team working". This hints at an attitude of the less the team working is discussed, the easier it will be to ram through a dirty deal involving unacceptable concessions.

The key to the development of the dispute lies in the hands of the leadership of the large powerful metropolitan CWU branches. They

have demonstrated that they have both the clout to organise effective unofficial action independent of the national full-time leadership, and that they can liaise nationally to put pressure on the postal executive. The ballot came about after unofficial branch based national rank and file meetings started to put some pressure on postal executive members who then forced Johnson into pulling out of talks and moving to a ballot.

It is absolutely vital that now this unofficial network has managed to force some action it is not put into mothballs, leaving everything in the hands of the executive.

Over the last few years, Royal Mail has been the site of around one-third of all disputes nationwide. The outcome of this battle will therefore shape the development of the industrial class struggle well beyond the Post Office itself.

A victory for the postalworkers will surely embolden other groups of workers, and, coming on the eve of the likely election of a Blair government, it should help to break down the influence of the "don't-rock-the-boat-wait-for-Labour" line which is being vigorously peddled by virtually every section of the official trade union leadership at the moment.

A victory for Royal Mail management will have the opposite effect. It will set back probably the most militant group of workers in the country at present and encourage the bosses all along the line. It will also encourage Blair to "get tough" on the public sector unions if elected.

For that reason it is absolutely vital that all serious socialists and trade unionists do everything they can to help the postalworkers win.

Postalworkers' support groups should be set up in every town and city. Other groups of workers moving into dispute should try to co-ordinate their action with the postalworkers.

This kind of activity is already happening in particular localities, for instance a Mid-Lothian workers' liaison committee, drawing together stewards and reps across industry, has been established in and around Edinburgh with strong support from both the local CWU and RMT, who are also in the middle of a strike ballot of guards and senior conductors. The issue of co-ordinated rail and postalworker strike days has already been discussed and supported in this forum. It provides a model to be applied elsewhere.

The rail ballots are over grade specific issues but they have the potential to generate a strike at least as self-sustaining and effective as the 1994 signalworkers' dispute.

Both guards and senior conductors are "safety critical" grades, meaning that trains can't run without them. The only way for the train operators to keep the trains running is to use hundreds of members of the train drivers' craft union ASLEF as scabs, an unlikely and dangerous prospect.

A victory for the guards and conductors will delay and hold back the bosses' offensive across the whole of the privatised railways, while encouraging union resistance.

The post and rail ballots are particular significant given the relatively low level of activity elsewhere.

There is to be no national action over pay in most of local government and the health service this year although a local government manual workers' strike is still a very remote outside possibility. Local disputes are, of course, still taking place. The same picture applies to education and the Civil Service.

The introduction of the hated Jobseeker's Allowance has caused a lot of local disputes in the Civil Service. There have been strikes at a number of Benefits Agency offices for the introduction of screens. What is needed now is a proper campaign of national industrial action up to and including all-out.

Across the rest of the public sector, action tends to be locally isolated. Firefighters in Merseyside, Derbyshire and Essex are all in the midst of or entering local strikes, but no national dispute is on the cards, particularly after the decision of the London Region of the Fire Brigades Union not to ballot for strikes over cuts.

A tube strike is possible over pay and hours, but we are still in the very first stages and it is too early to say what will develop. A determined lead from the local RMT could well get action going round the issue of shorter hours — a campaign that will undermine ASLEF's unofficial "no-strike" deal with London Underground Limited. But at present all the initiative is in the hands of ASLEF, who are setting the pace with a ballot due to start soon.

In most of the private sector industrial action is at a very low level with the Mersey dockers' determined stand against casualisation standing out as an exception to the rule.

An awful lot now hangs on the outcome of a handful of disputes.

# Deep d

By a very narrow margin the Israeli right seem to have won the 30 May general election. It may well be a radical turning point in the Middle East. Michel Warshawski, who is a member of the Israeli Trotskyist organisation, Matzpen, spoke to Mark Osborn.

AS the final votes are counted it looks very likely that Benyamin Netanyahu will beat Shimon Peres in the vote for prime minister.

The new system of voting meant casting a vote for the prime minister and then voting for a party list.

We supported the bloc of the Communist Party and the National Democratic Alliance, which is a new regroupment of all the Palestinian national organisations inside Israel.

In the vote for the prime minister we called for an abstention.

*WL: I agree that socialists could not vote for Peres. Nevertheless, there must have been a lot of pressure to do so: there is a rational case for voting for Peres and there are real differences between the candidates.*

It is true that there was very strong pressure. Some people who would never — in the past — have voted Labour, voted for Peres. Some people, including close friends of mine, who had said they would abstain, at the last moment voted for Peres. They felt that they could not allow Netanyahu to be elected...

*Presumably the left is now very depressed*

Yes, right now they are. Everyone is down. But, in most cases, when I ask for a rational explanation of this feeling people have some difficulties in explaining the policy differences — either on social-economic matters or on policy towards the Palestinians. There is a gap between the emotions and rational analysis.

*But it will make a difference on questions such as the settlements, towards the Palestinian administration...*

Yes, they will be more arrogant. But the question is not what Likud's policy will be, but what exactly could be expected from

# ivisions in Israel

Peres' policy. He had made it very clear from the actions of the last government and from his election campaign that he does not intend to make any compromise concerning settlements and Jerusalem.

It is not that Likud is becoming more progressive, but rather that Labour is now applying Likud policies.

Even from a purely electoral point of view the Lebanon war was a disaster for Labour. They miscalculated: for every vote they expected to win on the Jewish side they lost two Palestinian votes. I calculate they lost about 25,000 votes — 10,000 abstaining and a further 15,000 not turning out to vote.

But they also, in fact, lost Jewish votes too. Here this war was considered a complete failure.

In my opinion Labour lost the election after the assassination of [leading Hamas member] Yihya Ayash [by Israeli security forces]. After the killing of Rabin the concept of peace was very popular and the right were in disarray.

But then they provoked a breakdown of the ceasefire with Hamas by killing Yihya Ayash. Suicide bombings followed. This allowed the right to present Peres' policy as contradictory to personal security.

Objectively, from the point of view of the Israeli state, the Labour Party's policy was very successful — and it is no accident that big business is one hundred per cent behind Labour. However, now, they had allowed themselves to be presented as failures by Likud.

I think that there are some other reasons for Labour's loss. Structurally, there is a deep division in the Israeli people. This is not an ideological, but a social division. 50% of the population — more or less — will never vote Labour. The Oriental Jews will never vote Labour. This is irreversible. These people consider Labour and the so-called Labour Zionists, Meretz, as their enemies — the people who are responsible for their situation, who humiliate and patronise them. This is a matter of class.

This situation is not new. What is new is that the religious community now considers the Labour Party as anti-religious and opposed to their way of life. This is the culmination of a process going back 20 years.

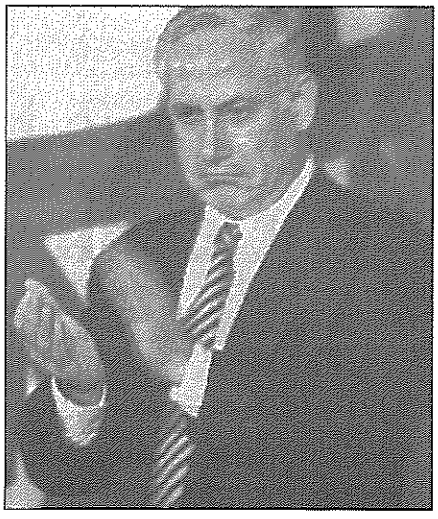
I think it is a mistake to try to explain this as a pro- or anti-peace matter or a left- or right-wing question. It is social. It is about class.

*What are your perspectives now?*

Potentially one positive development from a right wing government is that there will be a demystification of politics.

Restarting an opposition in parliament and on the streets will be shaped by the government that is formed. If there is a national unity government in the future the opposition in the Knesset will be 9 members from Meretz and 9 from the Arab parties.

If the Labour Party is in opposition we may well have a new turn in Peace Now activity.



**Benyamin Netanyahu**

## Germany's workers are fighting back

By Rhodri Evans

GERMAN capitalist investment is pouring into Britain, which already gets the bulk of Japanese and US investment in Europe. A South Korean firm has recently decided to produce in South Wales rather than Korea because Welsh wages are cheaper than Korean.

German building workers are in dispute with the bosses because they have refused to agree to a minimum wage which would stop them employing building workers from other countries (including Britain) at half German wages or less.

Now Germany's chancellor, Helmut Kohl, is telling German workers that they must accept a public-sector pay freeze and drastic social cuts, totalling over £30 billion off the government budget, because they are the most expensive workers in the world. They must go down the same road as Britain.

Kohl claims that the freeze and the cuts are the only way to cut unemployment and save Germany's welfare state. As if Britain did not prove the opposite! Worldwide, the general pattern is that strong labour movements and higher wages *go together with* better "social wages" and lower unemployment, not the opposite.

Labour costs per hour are about 40% higher in west Germany than in Britain, on 1991 figures. But investment, training, and productivity are higher, too. In 1991 it took 29.9 hours to assemble a Ford car in Germany, against 52.2 hours in Britain, making German labour costs per unit product *cheaper* than British. As Karl Marx pointed out in *Capital* — using Britain and Germany as illustrations then, too, but the other way round — "it will be found frequently that the wage in the first nation is higher than in the second, whilst the relative price of labour... as compared both with surplus-value and with the value of the product, stands higher in the second than in the first".

Moreover, a bigger part of the German workforce than of the British is employed in direct production: 39.2% in manufacturing in 1991, as against only 27.5% in Britain.

The British road would take German workers the same way as British workers — to mass pauperisation, social despair, and demoralising insecurity. At present Germany, strained by the travails of unification with the old Stalinist state in the east and by the influx of many ethnic-German "Aussiedler" from Eastern Europe, has an unemployment rate slightly higher than Britain's. The social effects are far less brutal. Unemployment benefit is paid at 60% of previous wages, and, overall, social benefits run 36% higher, per head of population, than Britain's.

The government plans to raise the pension age for women; cut unemployment benefit, sick pay, child benefit and job protection; and reduce social health insurance, for example for dental treatment.

The opposition Social-Democratic Party is, for once, protesting loudly, and has the strength in the upper house of parliament to block these plans. The danger must be that they will settle for some reduced or slowed-down version. Opinion surveys show a big majority against the cuts. Trade unions organised protest marches all across Germany on 1 May, and a round of protest strikes by the public-sector union OTV on 20-22 May.

The increased international mobility and fluidity of capital makes German capitalists less willing to invest patiently for the long term. An international "levelling" of workers' conditions is under way. The coming struggles of the German unions will play a big part in deciding whether it is a levelling-up or a levelling-down.

# Socialist Labour Party: little controversy, no orientation, no hope

By Martin Thomas

SMIRKING contentedly, Patrick Sikorski, in the chair, called Arthur Scargill to speak against the first challenge to the platform from the floor at the Socialist Labour Party's founding conference on 4 May.

Using the same arm-waving and finger-stabbing that might accompany a rallying speech at a strike meeting, Scargill told the conference to reject Steve Freeman's proposal to move up a contentious item from the end of the agenda, where it might be lost for lack of time. The Steering Committee had done a difficult job well. Moreover, Scargill added, pressing the "politically correct" buttons, changing the agenda might displace the "vitally important" (though uncontentious) item on disabled rights.

Only a small minority voted against the platform, no more than had refused to join the long and loud applause when a visitor to the conference from the Cuban embassy was announced. Policy amendments from various small groups of revolutionaries who have joined the SLP (from "The Leninist", RDG, Workers' Power...) were all defeated, the closest vote being on scrapping all immigration controls.

On the face of it, the nominal Trotskyists at the centre of the SLP — Patrick Sikorski, and other ex-members of Socialist Outlook like Brian Heron and Caroline Sikorski — have become prisoners of the Stalinistic, left-reformist politics of Scargill. But it runs the other way, too. Scargill, who despite his ideology was an important and in many ways estimable leader in the mass labour movement for 20 years, from the mid-'60s to the mid-'80s, has become the prisoner of the sectarian, Potemkin-village, "party-building" schemes of the supposed Trotskyists.

The SLP conference even refused to amend the platform's declaration that: "Today, radical opposition in Britain is symbolised not by the Labour and trade union movement but by the groupings such as those which defeated the poll tax, the anti-motorway and animal rights bodies, Greenpeace and other anti-nuclear campaigners, and those fighting against opencast mining".

About 600 of the SLP's claimed 4,000 members attended the conference. The conference seemed markedly more working-class than most far-left gatherings, but also much more elderly. Most members looked to be at least in their 40s. The SLP has a scattering of prominent trade-union officials, especially in the rail union RMT, but not, I think, many pivotal rank-and-file activists.

My impression was more of a gathering of isolated, disoriented activists, people who have become progressively alienated from their Labour Party and trade union branches by the drift to the right over the last ten years. The political tone was more disappointed reformist than revolutionary. Scargill's sneers at talk about "what one revolutionary said to another in 1917", and his claim that to talk about "armed revolution" was "absolutely irresponsible", went down well.

The conference documents were full of promises about what "a Socialist Labour government" would do, but lacking in ideas about what the SLP, as a small left group, can do now.

Some SLP members have joined the Welfare State Network. If they can draw other SLP members into that activity, then a great deal can be achieved: some hundreds of working-class socialists, currently scattered, can be drawn into immediate, concerted, and effective grass-roots activity. In that activity, and in discussion round it, many can be convinced that their conclusion from the decline of the Labour Party and the Communist Party should not be to despair of the labour movement, but to reject the reformist and Stalinist ideas which shaped that decline.

But if the SLP continues to set its sights on the future parliamentary achievements of "a Socialist Labour government", with little idea of what to do between now and then, its prospects are poor.



*Inside the unions*

# A new left in UNISON

By Sleeper

THIS year's conference of UNISON, the giant that unites workers across a large part of the public sector, could see some interesting developments for the left.

UNISON was created out of the merger of three unions — COHSE, NALGO and NUPE — but has still not gelled together as a proper, single, united union. Disunity exists at the rank and file level as much as it does at the level of the leadership.

UNISON's left has until now been far too dominated by the left that existed in NALGO. Left forces from the old manual union, NUPE, and the health service based COHSE, have been pushed to the side.

Though a lot of the ex-NALGO UNISON membership is made up of people in low-paid, boring, white-collar work, the bulk of the left from NALGO tends to be "professional" people in revolutionary groups.

The ex-NUPE and COHSE left are justifiably suspicious of the pretensions of many people from this milieu and turned off by the prevalence of anti-Labour posturing. They react to what they perceive as a lack of concern for the kind of issues faced by such as hospital porters, hospital cleaners, refuse collectors. They also see the ex-NALGO left showing a lack of respect for the alternative left traditions of the other unions, particularly NUPE.

Last year the ex-NALGO people mounted various left challenges to Rodney Bickerstaffe in the election for UNISON General Secretary. These were perceived by NUPE/COHSE people as a pointless and divisive challenge to someone they regarded as "their man" in the official leadership. This has created a situation where a new left organisation — UNISON Labour Left — is set to emerge. This could build on the strength of the non-NALGO left, providing a voice for the blue-collar workers, and those who wish to develop an agenda of demands on a Labour government, while attempting to draw in some of the ex-NALGO left.

The launch of UNISON Labour Left is an entirely positive development. *Workers' Liberty* supporters in the union will do everything they can to help it grow into a force that can play a central part in getting a national leadership elected which is prepared to organise national industrial action against the pay freeze and job cuts.

This would be a huge step forward from where we are today, with Militant and their hangers-on content to be part of a left that is a "principled" 10% minority with no strategy whatsoever for the union as a whole and no role except to split the broader left and let the right wing win NEC elections.

# Paul Foot, philo-semite

By Sean Matgamna

DEAR PAUL FOOT,

In your *Socialist Worker* column (16 May) you print a letter in response to what you said about Israel on *Any Questions* headed "Mr Foot, Do You Hate The Jews?", and reply: "No, I don't hate Jews at all."

Of course not. Who could possibly suspect you of hating Jews — you, a life-long socialist, and for 30-odd years the most prominent acolyte of Tony Cliff, who is in origin a Palestinian Jew? No.

You deny the right of Israel to exist. You are hostile to Jews (and others) who are "Zionists", that is, to Jews who defend Israel's right to exist, which means most Jews alive. You engage in blinkered, savagely partisan, propaganda against Israel on the radio, on TV, and in newspaper columns. Against Israel you support even such an Arab Hitler as Saddam Hussein. Of course you do not hate Jews!

To tell you the truth, if I didn't know you for a socialist I might conclude: "Typical upper-class twit giving vent to the ingrained prejudice of his sort — a bit like the people who run *Private Eye*, perhaps — part of the romantic Arabist strain of British upper-class anti-Jewish feeling." But I know you for a member of the Socialist Workers' Party. You do not hate Jews.

But substitute hate for being bribed, and the position is rather as described in this well-known comment, Hilaire Belloc's I think: "You simply cannot bribe or twist/ The honest British journalist./ But seeing what unbribed he'll do/ There's really no occasion to."

You consistently reject the only socialist approach, Arab-Jewish working-class unity and consistent democracy as a means to achieve that unity — that is, the most equitable settlement possible in this tragic conflict: two states for the two peoples and full equality for Jews and Arabs in each others' states.

Your column is astonishing in its ignorance of or lack of concern for truth — astonishing not according to the standards of a high-profile bourgeois journalist, but according to the standards of someone who might possibly consider himself a Marxist.

You say socialists sympathised with the idea of a safe home for Jews after "the long years of Nazi persecution." In fact, 12 years. You substitute an exaggerated measure of time to avoid mentioning the relevant measure: six million Jews murdered and many others uprooted.

You say the "chosen homeland", Palestine, was "already populated" by Palestinian Arabs. But the Jews were by 1947 a big national minority, about one-third of the population: why did they not have rights, including the right to separate, and the right to defend themselves?

"The Jewish state could not be created without the forcible expulsion from their homes of a million people." In fact, Israel was proclaimed, in May 1948, in territory allotted by the United Nations, without any Arabs being expelled. Hundreds of thousands of Arabs *did* flee — the great majority not expelled — after Arab states, with the backing, naturally enough, of the Palestinian Arabs, invaded Israel. If Israel had not won that war, then the Jews would have been massacred or expelled: indeed, in the following years, almost as large a number of Jews were expelled from or fled Arab countries. It would have been better if no-one had been expelled, but what sense other than malevolent Arab chauvinism can there be in such distortions of history — if you yourself know the history, such lies — for the too-tolerant readers of *Socialist Worker*?

The Six Day War of June 1967 did become a war of conquest by Israel, but the moves that triggered the war came from Egypt, which blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba. Until the Egypt-Israel treaty of 1979, all the Arab states — and, until 1988, the Palestine Liberation Organisation — took as their goal the complete destruction of Israel and the subjugation of its people. That being so, to talk as if the long conflict came only from Israel's *"unashamedly imperialist aggression and occupation of neighbouring territories"* is to be the socialist equivalent of a *Sun* journalist, a shameless lawyer for a preconceived view rather than an objective analyst.

Israel has been moving — though the 30 May election may change that — towards withdrawal from the occupied territories, trading land for peace. If the Arab states and the PLO had been willing to make peace in the aftermath of the 1967 war, then Israeli withdrawal from those territories would have been the immediate result, and without the painful uncertainties that accompany the process three decades later.

The cycle of terrorism and counter-terrorism did not begin with Israel's *"shameless imperialist aggression."* It began way back in 1929, or earlier, with Muslim chauvinist pogroms against Jewish settlers (who were not always "Zionists", either).

*"The persecuted became the persecutors, the oppressed the oppressors."* Yes, tragically, that was the experience of the Palestinian Arabs. Yet all this occurred in the context of Arab invasions, threatened invasions, or foiled invasions. *"Jews are far less secure in Israel than they are, say, in Britain and the US."* Yes indeed: in other words, Arab chauvinism is a real threat. But in the 1930s and '40s, when Israel was shaped, all major countries — from the US to Stalin's Russia — kept out the Jews threatened with annihilation. Britain kept them out of Palestine.

For years after the Second World War many thousands of Jews languished in Displaced Persons' camps — often former German concentration camps — or in British internment camps in Cyprus. Some Jews going home to Poland from Hitler's camps met with pogroms and murder.

What should the Israeli Jews do now? Pack up and move?

It is not you, so you say, who connect Israel, and your hostility to it, with Jews in general; rather, it is those who say that your attitude to Israel is anti-semitic. But can you possibly fail to understand that since Israel has come to be central to the identity of most Jews alive — a few religious people and revolutionary socialists excepted — the distinction you make is spurious and false? Isn't it no more than a smirking smart-arse hypocrisy, the equivalent of saying "if the cap fits, wear it"?

By her attitude to Israel, you say, your correspondent is *"cutting herself off from the best Jewish socialists and reformers."* They have *"consistently been anti-Zionists."* Some of your best friends are Jews, eh? These are *"some of the fiercest fighters for human emancipation." "All... are anti-Zionists."*

Is it that you don't notice that here you automatically label almost the entire Jewish population of Israel — workers, socialists, the lot — as reactionary, together with most Jews worldwide who are not "anti-Zionist", and write them out of the forward march of humankind? Surely not! You are no mere critic of Israel: you want Israel destroyed. Even a Saddam Hussein is to be supported in such an enterprise.

You probably are unaware that since Trotsky, continuing to follow the pre-Stalinist line of the Communist International, supported the right of Jewish migration to Palestine (as to Britain, the US, etc.), he would not qualify as a latter-day anti-Zionist, and that in SWP terms his credentials as a "fierce fighter for human emancipation" would have to be severely reviewed, if not revoked!

It is you, let me suggest, and Cliff, your mentor, who part company with the fight for human emancipation. That, ultimately, is a fight for socialism. It will not be waged under the banner of Arab nationalism or of any other nationalism. In practice you are vicarious Arab nationalists.

For you, Israel is to blame even for Arab chauvinism. *"Arab nationalism... and Arab socialism have been sidetracked and contained by the very existence of Israel."* Israel, and the Jewish settlers before that, are to be blamed for not letting themselves be crushed? Comrade Foot, isn't this a disgraceful exhibition of British bourgeois Arabism disguised as socialism and licensed for socialist consumption by the strange figure of Cliff, the Palestinian-Jewish Arab chauvinist? Cliff gets away with training people like you in such politics because it is hard to pin the proper anti-Jewish tag on him. Cliff is an Arab chauvinist.

Nonsense? Recall the interview with Cliff about his history in the SWP magazine in which he criticises himself for believing in 1938-9 that Jews should have a right to flee from Hitler to Palestine (*Socialist Review* 100).

Think about it. What is he saying here but that, if countries like Britain and the US could not be persuaded to let Jews in, then it would have been better that they were left at the mercy of Hitler than that they should go to Palestine? The interview is very sloppily done, but the implication is clear — and it fits the vicarious Arab chauvinist politics which Cliff purveys and has educated you and others in.

Cliff presents himself as having been in the Stalinist party in Palestine in the mid-1930s. If that is true, then he was brainwashed, like other young Jewish members of the CP, into Arab chauvinism. (Some were sent to plant bombs in Jewish quarters: if you want more details, see the article on "Trotsky and the Jews" in *Workers' Liberty* 31.) Even if he did falter in 1938-9, for 30 years now he has spread an updated version of such politics. Your politics on Israel/Palestine, Paul Foot, are rooted in Third Period and then Popular Front Stalinism in Palestine!

I repeat, contrary to the SWP's vicarious Arab chauvinism, the only socialist policy for the Jewish-Arab conflict is the fight for Jewish and Arab working-class unity on the basis of mutual recognition of national rights: two states for the two peoples!

For sloppiness, double standards, misrepresentation, and plain mendacity, it would be hard to find so large a concentration in so small a number of words as your column contains. But still, you are not anti-Jewish. Some of your best friends are Jews! You, comrade Foot, are for the Jews what Belloc's journalist was for the truth.

*"I really must refute your views: /*
*Believe me, I don't hate no Jews; /*
*For seeing what pure love will do, /*
*What need have I for hatred too?"*

*Ireland: the Sinn Fein/Provisional IRA position*

# John Major must be a partner for peace

## By Gerry Adams

SINCE the collapse of the peace process I an others in the Sinn Fein leadership have been working, at times on a daily basis, to create the conditions in which that process can be restored. Despite all the difficulties I am totally committed to this task. All political leaders have to play a full role in creating the conditions which will maximise the possibility of securing a democratic and negotiated peace settlement.

There are great difficulties in this, not least because of the history of the conflict itself and particularly the experiences of the last two or three years. [The difficulties] arise mainly from the British government's refusal so far to engage in a good faith way and to respond meaningfully to the opportunities presented to it. The Taoiseach's [Irish prime minister's] stewardship of the process has also caused some difficulties, but it is worth noting that the focus of the Dublin government has been a more positive one in recent times.

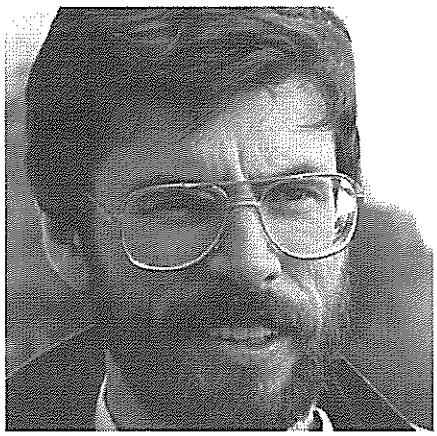
The refusal of the unionist leaderships to be part of the process, the attitude of the loyalists and the resumption of the IRA campaign are all factors which have to be dealt with. As part of our endeavours to do just this my colleagues and I have remained in contact with a wide range of political opinion. This includes the Irish government, the US administration, John Hume and a range of other individuals on both sides of the Atlantic.

All... have a common interest in making sure that the talks scheduled to begin on 10 June are real talks. A democratic peace settlement of the conflict in Ireland demands honest dialogue to resolved the causes of the conflict.

A lot of the focus from the media is on whether the IRA will call a cessation. There is not, however, the same focus on the other factors even though all of these are interrelated. There is also a concerted effort to reduce all of these difficulties to one. That is, to the question of an IRA cessation. The media is filled with the politics of Sinn Fein being "pressurised" to bring about an IRA ceasefire.

This does not help the effort to restore the peace process. Indeed it is not meant to. It is meant to cause confusion and to unsettle republicans and more importantly because republicans are confident in our own sense of what we have to do, insofar as British government sources are involved, it is meant to off-load their responsibility for creating real talks.

Clearly there is a need for the British government to play a full role. Unless John Major becomes a partner in the peace process a settlement is impossible. There is a need too for the Dublin government to fulfil its responsibilities and there is a role of the international community, particularly the US, to continue its even-handed approach. A future strategy must also seek to create political condition for



a negotiated settlement which involves the unionists in an inclusive search for a lasting peace.

Obviously the creation of such a way forward is beyond the gift of Sinn Fein alone even though it is our firm intention.

What then of the British government's role? Mr Major must move in a decisive way. In saying this, I am mindful of Mr Major's difficulties, but notwithstanding these difficulties, he is the British prime minister and he must fulfil his responsibilities in a flexible manner.

The purpose of real negotiations must be to bring about substantive and significant change in the following areas:

a. Constitutional and political
b. Demilitarisation
c. Democratic rights

All issues must be on the agenda.

Sinn Fein spokespersons have advised that if the peace process is to be re-established the British government must give clear, specific and unambiguous public assurances that these negotiations will be inclusive, with no item on the agenda allowed to become an insurmountable obstacle to progress and all negotiations to be conducted within an agreed time frame. The British government and the Unionist leadership have made the issue of decommissioning a blockage. This must be removed. Obviously the issue has to be resolved to everyone's satisfaction but it cannot become a precondition.

It is within John Major's ability to create a rhetoric which points up the possibility of movement without the substance which such movement requires. This would be entirely counterproductive and I would advise strongly against it because in so doing he would merely be seeking to pressurise the IRA and while this may seem legitimate from the British point of view a different psychology is required. This needs to see beyond the short term because even if the result was a renewed IRA cessation, and it is doubtful whether the IRA can be pressurised in this way. If this led only to a repeat of the experience of the last cessation, or to inconclusive talks, then we would all face the worst of all possible scenarios.

Without clear and firm guidance at government level there is no prospect of resolving these problems and a proper structure and process of negotiations must be created and used in the most constructive manner. Nothing can be agreed until everything is agreed and all relevant issues must be addressed in full and comprehensive fashion so that there is at least the possibility that change will be the outcome of these deliberations. For example, there can be no exclusively internal or partitionist settlement. There must be substantial and significant change on constitutional and political matters and while this presents huge difficulties for the Unionists there must be a serious effort to reach agreement on this matter.

Parity of esteem and equality of treatment will have to be dealt with; the imbalance in the unemployment ratio: equality in economic development; greater and more equally shared prosperity; empowerment and inclusion of deprived and marginalised communities. These should be pursued inside and outside negotiations.

Parity of esteem for the Irish language and culture is required.

The whole issue of demilitarisation needs to be resolved. This includes prisoners, disarmament, policing and the administration of justice and an end to repressive legislation.

The negotiating process must endeavour to reach a new agreement which can earn the allegiance of all the Irish people by accommodating diversity and providing for national reconciliation. For this to be achieved everyone involved must be committed to reaching agreement.

It is essential, therefore, that both governments shape the negotiating process in such a way as to ensure that all parties are treated on an equal basis and that no party has an undemocratic advantage.

These must be no preconditions. And there can be no attempt to predetermine the outcome, nor to preclude any outcome to the negotiations.

[We need to ensure] that the talks beginning on 10 June:

a. Contain no preconditions;
b. Contain no actual or potential stalls;
c. Are time limited.

The two governments have stated that Sinn Fein cannot be involved in the talks scheduled to begin on 10 June unless the IRA renews its cessation. Whatever the IRA does Sin Fein has the right to be at the talks table. We have an electoral mandate. We are fighting a British-imposed election to renew that mandate. We do not accept any preconditions on negotiations. Nor do we impose any preconditions. Sinn Fein is not the IRA. Sinn Fein campaigns openly and peacefully in pursuit of our political aims. At the same time we accept our responsibility to try and create the proper climate and to help to bring about an end to all armed actions so that talks have a prospect of success.

*Slightly abridged from An Phoblacht, 16 May 1996*

# The economics of the Welfare State


**Cologne busworkers take part in a series of protest strikes (20-22 May) against threats to Germany's welfare state**

By Colin Foster

AS Gordon Brown out-Tories the Tories, there is a great void in reformist economic thinking. Ken Livingstone MP's *Socialist Economic Bulletin* tries to fill that void, but it does the job poorly*.

Among the innumerable graphs and charts in the *Socialist Economic Bulletin* is one which shows that since 1946 in Britain "a high share of wages is associated with a high level of investment, and a low share of wages with a low level of investment" (June 1995). A similar graph would show that higher "social wages" go — all other things being equal — with higher investment. The idea that pushing up wages and "social wages" will leave not enough profit to allow for renewal of machinery, buildings and equipment is a fallacy. Higher wages and "social wages" push the capitalists to innovate.

Unfortunately, the SEB does not draw the obvious conclusion: that we should press forward to rebuild the health service and the welfare state without cracking our heads over exactly how the government and the bosses will then balance their books.

On the contrary, the SEB argues that education, the Health Service and wages can be raised only after we have first (somehow) juggled with capitalist finances to raise the rate of investment.

"The core of the choice that will face the next Labour government", says the SEB, is this. "It can decide to sustain Britain's high military spending; to maintain the present level of dividend payments; to leave untouched the transfer of wealth from the exchequer to private individuals which took place with privatisation; and to take no measures to reverse Nigel Lawson's reduction of taxation of the rich...

"Alternatively Labour can tackle the crippling distortions of the UK economy listed above, maintain the present consumption of families and the social services, and *eventually* raise these *through the extra resources that economic growth created by investment will create*" (November 1995, emphasis added).

This is only another version of Gordon Brown's "as resources allow" argument, which in turn is a variant of the Tory "trickle-down" theory. First create an "undistorted" British capitalism, then hope to lick some gravy off the edges of its overflowing plate...

In fact to rebuild the Welfare State, we must grab meat from the plate. We must tax the rich. The top ten per cent have had tax cuts from the Tories now amounting to £10 billion a year. Corporation tax has been cut, too. Dividend and interest payments to individuals are running at £73 billion a year. Between 1979 and the early 1990s, the top ten per cent of individuals increased their slice of national income from 21 to 27 per cent, an almost exact reversal of the redistribution from the wealthy achieved between 1938 and 1949.

We should not be snared into the role of technical adviser to Kenneth Clarke or Gordon Brown. Our job is to mobilise, not to give advice about the running of economic machinery which we do not and cannot control.

To become advisers would be to become like a trade union which when it puts in a wage demand feels obliged to give a detailed prescription for how the employer could reduce other expenses to pay the higher wages. It is useful for the union to publicise fat profits and dividends. To go beyond that is to get trapped in diversionary arguments and to risk dividing the workers on secondary issues.

Moreover — as the SEB's graph confirms — the capitalist economy is not a system of fixed amounts, where every addition here is a subtraction there and vice versa. It is elastic.

Karl Marx showed that a general rise of wages would not mean a simple arithmetically corresponding drop in profits, but a spur to capital accumulation.

"The Ten Hours Bill... introduced since 1848... was a sudden and compulsory rise in wages... in the leading industrial branches... All the... official economical mouthpieces of the middle class proved... that it would sound the death-knell of English industry... They threatened a decrease of accumulation, rise of prices, loss of markets, stinting of production, consequent reaction upon wages, ultimate ruin...

"Well, what was the result? A rise in the money wages of the factory operatives, despite the curtailing of the working day, a great increase in the number of factory hands employed, a continuous fall in the prices of their products, a marvellous development in the productive powers of their labour, an unheard-of progressive expansion of the markets...

"Take... the rise in England of agricultural wages from 1849 to 1859... The farmers... introduced machinery of all sorts, adopted more scientific methods... This is the general method in which a reaction, quicker or slower, of capital against a rise of wages takes place in old, settled countries..."

The same principle applies to increases in the "social wage". A victory in struggle against the capitalist desire to grab everything for profits leads not to some carefully calibrated readjustment of the system, in line with the prescriptions of clever reformers who juggle with the figures as if dealing with a collection of static quantities, but to new struggles on a higher level.

However, the SEB remains focused on tackling "the key to understanding the present situation", the major "distortion", "the real problem", "a world, and UK, shortage of capital" (SEB, March 1996).

* Partly, perhaps, because — behind Livingstone as front-man — it is written by supposed Marxists, members of the Socialist Action group (ex-IMG), who pretend to be reformists in the service of their own esoteric tactical schemes.

A strange way for socialists to define "the real problem"! Surely we want to *abolish* capital, not worry about the "shortage" of it! And the analysis leads to an unfortunate prescription — we must first remedy the "shortage", and get more capital created (that is, as Marx would put it, more alien wealth that dominates the workers), before we can seek real improvements.

In fact, both Britain and the other major capitalist countries are full of idle factories, unused capacity, and vast capitalist cash-hoards. There is no shortage of capital. The US, in particular, "benefits from large imports of [liquid] capital" (SEB, March 1996), although its rate of fixed investment is low. The decisive factor in the low overall recent rates of fixed investment in the UK has been low *public* investment (SEB, November 1995), which has nothing much to do with alleged general problems of "the rising price of capital — i.e. increasing interest rates". The real problem on which the SEB's speculations are based is the radical shift since the late 1970s in the world regime of capitalism, through a huge expansion and speeding-up of the international movements of finance-capital (foreign-exchange, international bond and share trading, etc.). Together with the deliberate decision of all the major capitalist governments to "sweat out" economic downturns rather than attempt "reflation" and run the risk of the rapid price inflation, consequent wages militancy, and currency crises of the mid-1970s, this shift in regime has certainly produced a bias towards "short-termism" — keeping capital liquid, going for quick gains, avoiding long-term commitments.

The SEB's proposals — to cut British military spending, restrict dividend payments, and raise taxes on the rich — cannot undo the changes in world capitalism. They cannot bring back some golden age of "undistorted" capitalism. They cannot do much even on the SEB's own diagnosis of the situation. How can cutting *British* military spending and *British* dividend payouts to the level typical of other capitalist countries cure a "world shortage of capital" which exists also in the countries of lower military spending and dividend payouts?

Of course, socialists will support cuts in military spending, increased taxes on the rich, and moves to divert to public purposes some of the loot currently paid out in dividends. We are less keen on some of the SEB's other schemes, like tax breaks for companies to encourage fixed investment. We question the notion that military spending cuts are a way to find quick extra resources for public services without bothering the rich (are the demobilised soldiers and redundant arms-industry workers just to be thrown onto the streets, or won't money be spent on industrial conversion schemes?). While we hold no brief for the Maastricht Treaty, any more than for the various national capitalist policies of which it is an agreed summary, we question Livingstone's focus (in his "Alternatives to Maastricht" campaign) on easing the Maastricht limits for national debts and budget deficits. Socialists are not especially champions of big budget deficits, and Britain's Tories have run huge deficits without any obvious benefit to the working class.

Nevertheless, the gist of the SEB proposals is welcome as far as it goes.

The proposals can even be given a left-wing slant — at the expense of intellectual coherence — by earmarking the extra public money to be got from the military cuts, taxes and so on, for education, for example, instead of capitalist investment.

To welcome the proposals is one thing. To make them your dogma and cure-all, your patent method for restoring prosperity and harmony, is another.

The SEB's approach here is one with a long and bad history in the socialist movement. Too impatient, or too impressed with their own cleverness and cunning, simply to argue socialist and class-struggle principles, various socialists have repeatedly gone for "coded" formulas or slogans. The slogan, not in itself particularly socialist, is chosen for being a plausible lever in current mainstream politics. The "cunning" socialists hope to get wider support by hiding their other ideas behind that one slogan. To the ruling class, or to the workers and students to whom the slogan is put, it seems modest, reasonable, and realistic. But the "cunning" socialists believe that they have in their hands a secret logic by which the slogan will lead to their desired socialist conclusions.

The classic example — and a rather grander one than the SEB — is the agitation in the 1860s of Ferdinand Lassalle, the German socialist leader against whose ideas Marx wrote his famous *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Lassalle launched a movement based exclusively on the demands for universal suffrage and state aid for producer cooperatives, not because those demands were what he really wanted — as Marx commented, Lassalle himself knew the *Communist Manifesto* by heart — but because Lassalle believed that "the whole art of practical success lies in this: in the concentration of all power, at all times, upon one single point", and that single point chosen for immediate plausibility.

Marx and Engels criticised Lassalle, not because they were against universal suffrage, or even against state aid for cooperatives, but because they objected to basing the movement on these artificially chosen, restrictive, slogans, rather than on the demands arising in struggle from the workers' needs. Eduard Bernstein, while he was still a revolutionary, commented aptly:

"The excuse [by Lassalle] that the 'mob' must not yet be told what [the] end was, or that the masses were not yet to be won over to it, does not hold. If the masses could not yet be interested in the actual end of the movement, the movement itself was premature, and then, even were the means attained, they would not lead to the desired end... But if the body of working-men was sufficiently developed to understand the end of the movement, then this should have been openly declared. It need not have even then been represented as an immediate aim, to be realised there and then. Not only the leaders, however, but every one of the followers that were led ought to have know what was the end these means were to attain, and that they were only means to that end" (*Ferdinand Lassalle as Social Reformer*).

We can and should rouse workers and students to rebuild the welfare state, without getting diverted into technicalities about exactly how capitalist finances should be adjusted to accommodate it. If we cannot do that, then it is no good hoping to get round the problem by promoting some slick formula which we can present publicly as making capitalism "undistorted" and prosperous, but believe privately will lead to socialism. "If the masses are not yet interested in the actual end of the movement" — welfare for all — "then, even if the means are attained" — the rejigging of capitalist finances — "they will not lead to the desired end".

## The lost leader

I

Just for a handful of silver he left us,
Just for a riband to stick in his coat —
Found the one gift of which fortune bereft us,
Lost all the others she lets us devote;
They, with the gold to give, doled him out silver,
So much was theirs who so little allowed:
How all our copper had gone for his service!
Rags — were they purple, his heart had been proud!
We that had loved him so, followed him, honoured him,
Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,
Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,
Made him our pattern to live and to die!
Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,
Burns, Shelley, were with us, — they watch from their graves!
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,
— He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves!

II

We shall march prospering, — not thro' his presence;
Songs may inspirit us, — not from his lyre;
Deeds will be done, — while he boasts his quiescence,
Still bidding crouch whom the rest bade aspire:
Blot out his name, then, record one lost soul more,
One task more declined, one more footpath untrod,
One more devils'-triumph and sorrow for angels,
One wrong more to man, one more insult to God!
Life's night begins: let him never come back to us!
There would be doubt, hesitation and pain,
Forced praise on our part — the glimmer of twilight,
Never glad confident morning again!
Best fight on well, for we taught him — strike gallantly,
Menace our heart ere we master his own;
Then let him receive the new knowledge and wait us,
Pardoned in heaven, the first by the throne!

*Robert Browning*

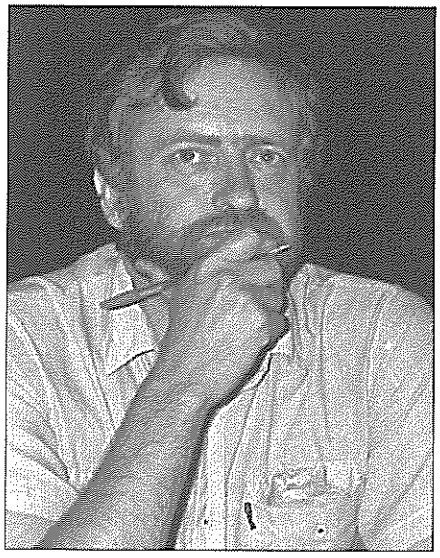
# Labour and the welfare state

Labour's front bench now openly accepts the bourgeois idea that welfare organised by the state is no longer "affordable". A future Labour government will continue to cut down the Welfare State. Workers' Liberty asked Tony Benn MP and Jeremy Corbyn MP to comment.

## Jeremy Corbyn: the fight around Europe

RIGHT-WING "think-tanks" express the current economic theories of "globalisation" which say the current welfare state is unaffordable in the industrialised countries. Therefore people need to be persuaded to agree to cut back on welfare spending and invest in private pensions and insurance schemes.

There is a political ethos that surrounds this. The most vivid example is Chile where a fascist regime under Pinochet destroyed the existing welfare system established by the Popular Unity Government in the early 1970s. Pinochet imposed



a compulsory 18% payment to a private insurance scheme on all workers. Chile has been paraded around the world as the ultimate model of the privatisation of welfare.

Within the debate in Britain and Europe the argument boils down to this: that corporate taxation is too high. If it continues at current levels, markets and investments will be increasingly lost to the Far East economies.

Every European government is being threatened by corporate tax payers saying unless you cut this, we'll take investment away. Threats from multinationals have been extremely crude in Germany and the Netherlands.

The Maastricht criteria are, in a sense, a reflection of corporate wishes in that they promise a Europe of price stablity and public spending cuts. Developments arising from these factors have resulted in huge opposition movements in Italy, France and Belgium and to a lesser extent in Spain, the Netherlands, Sweden and Britain. Now things are exploding in Germany.

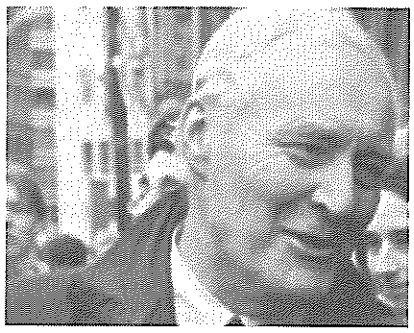
The Tories were extremely clever in the way they made their cuts — the impact has not been felt all at once. The biggest cut was removing the link between pensions and earnings. The cut wasn't very obvious at the time. The process was piecemeal, gradual and it wore away at people's confidence. First they removed the board and lodgings allowances, then they abolished single social security payments, later on they introduced the Jobseekers' Allowance.

The labour movement has not always responded well. One of the bad traditions of the British trade union movement is that it usually only gets involved in campaigns that are about workplace-related issues. I think that is a mistake. Unions in Italy and Belgium and France have, on the other hand, been much more socially orintated.

How *do* we respond to these attacks? Firstly we have to argue strongly for the principle of a National Insurance-based welfare state on the grounds that it is: emminently affordable; it is socially just; it is the only way of guaranteeing the elimination of poverty.

In Britain the Labour Party is supposed to be consulting on its welfare policy. The debate is being conducted very much in right-wing terms, apart from those of us who argue for the retention of the Welfare State.

I think we have to link up with the Pensioners' Parliament, with the Welfare State Network, with other campaigns, in order to defend these very important principles. There is a lot of anger in Britain about what has happened to the Welfare State. But we have a problem of disillusionment and apathy among large numbers of people, who feel increasingly alienated from the political system in Britain and unrepresented by any party. People hear both parties arguing for the same levels of cuts in welfare spending, and the National Union of Students turning its own history on its head and supporting a loans system. There is a feeling of alienation and anger. That could boil up into something very quickly. But it does require a lot of campaigning work and the preparedness of people, in and out of work, to work together in campaigns.



## Tony Benn: the key issue is full employment

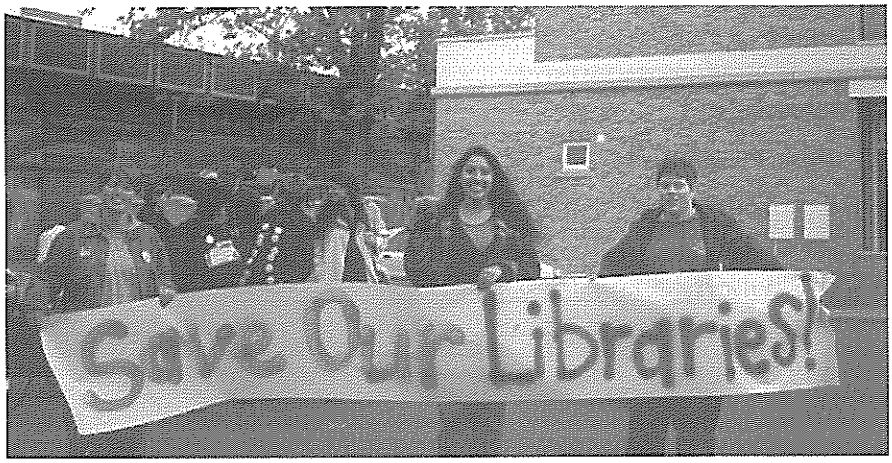
THE key issue in the financing of the welfare state is full employment. If we had full employment during the war to fight the Germans why can't we have full employment now — to keep the hospitals and schools running, to build homes to house the homeless?

There is plenty of money around — at the moment it's being used to build things like Trident! And of course we need a fairer taxation system.

When Labour gets into power, how many Labour MPs are going to vote for welfare cuts? I'm not sure many will. They have to answer to their constitutents and the welfare state is extremely popular.

# Diary of an occupation

By Liz




HACKNEY'S barbarous Labour council shut 7 of 14 libraries last week.

The unions and local library campaigners had fought long and hard to stop the closures. But the council was determined. The local Welfare State Network (WSN) decided that the closures should be highlighted by occupying a library in protest.

So, last Saturday me and Corrine went down to Parkside library, which had been closed early because the council had heard rumours that we intended an occupation, and checked the security. We were thinking that we might have to break in, and wanted to see if they'd hired any security to patrol the place.

In the end we decided that we could all get done for criminal damage if we broke into Parkside. So, not to be deterred, we decided to go somewhere else.

By this time we'd stopped using the names of libraries over the phone as a security measure — which made the whole thing much more exciting.

About 3.30pm we held a planning meeting at the Unity Club, for those activists who were going to begin the occupation. We decided to occupy Hackney Central library on Mare Street, just opposite the Town Hall. An hour later we began filtering into the reading rooms in small groups. The place was due to shut at 5pm. We all pretended to read books and the staff became more and more irritated with these peculiar readers who would not leave!

Mark very calmly told the manager and workers that the library was under occupation.

When they found out what was going on all the workers left. I think they were mostly 100% on our side — but could not say so openly, or join us, because of Hackney council's draconian staff policy. They would be very likely to be sacked.

The manager, on the other hand, went barmy. Arrh, poor man!

They got some senior people in, to negotiate with us.

But in the meantime we were going mad: putting up posters in the windows, declaring the occupation, putting bolts and padlocks on the doors.

After a while a couple of coppers came by and — by shouting through the window — asked how long we'd be staying! By this time we had got a deal with the council — they would not kick us out (they were scared about the publicity they would get if they used the police against us, only a few days after the national press had reported the deep disputes inside the ruling Labour group on the council). They said they wanted to send in a security guard. We said we were not having that. In the end they sent one in and we made them sit in the corridor outside.

We settled in and began running political discussions. The first was about the Russian revolution.

Elsewhere Cathy from the Welfare State Network was faxing and ringing the press. The night seemed to be going on forever and we began to worry about the lack of media interest. We had a mobile phone with us and started phoning up the local radio stations from the library. The only interview we did that night was on Talk Radio. I was interviewed by a total wanker. I told him that the welfare state should be funded by getting rid of the monarchy and cutting defence spending. He told me I was mad. He didn't give me the opportunity to say "and we should tax the rich". If I had been allowed to get round to that I expect he'd have sent men in white coats round to sedate me. He was not very left-wing.

There was no lack of reading material! I even caught one person reading Mills and Boon...

Sunday was non-stop work. The interviews were endless. We leafleted the local estates and went round the pubs with petitions and selling copies of the WSN's paper, *Action*.

We had called a mass meeting at the occupation for the next day — 4pm on Bank Holiday Monday. By this time the outside of the library was covered in banners and placards.

We got lots of local support. After the first televison interview people started turning up with piles of food. Milk, bread, fruit, cheese and cakes were all passed up to us through the main window.

We called regular occupation meetings. On Sunday night we decided, after some debate, to end the occupation the following day, just before the mass meeting, which we would then hold on the library steps.

It was quite a difficult decision to make. There was some talk about the possibility of the occupation stimulating strike action from library workers. On balance we decided we would not get a big solid strike and we were concerned that in such a situation library workers would get victimised. Instead we hope to organise a long term campaign to defend and extend Hackney's services — we can always go back into occupation in the future!

By now everyone in the occupation was absolutely knackered. Most of us got a couple of hours sleep on the floor and then got up for the final leaflet drops.

Just before 4pm on the Monday afternoon we took our stuff outside and told the council we had ended the occupation. We got 40 people to our meeting on the steps — not too bad for a Bank Holiday. I spoke and Jean spoke. People from the local UNISON spoke and congratulated us. Some of the workers from the library service turned out — and that is good news for a long-term campaign. This is just the beginning! We ended the meeting with a small demonstration down the main road, carrying a banner "Save our libraries" — spray-painted onto a big strip of wallpaper.

We ended up at the pub on the edge of London Fields for a well-deserved pint. And the political discussions continued into the evening.

What have I learnt? Lots and lots. More in a couple of days than I have in the last few years of my life.

# The revolution in English football

By Jane Ashworth


ON 8 June the European Football Championships begin at Wembley, the first international football spectacular to be held in England since the 1966 World Cup. In 30 years the game has changed: the terraces have been replaced by all-seater stands; supporters wear replica strips rather than scarf or bobble hat; live television coverage shows the foreign stars who ply their trade in the English League. The money-men and an elite of ex-player managers and coaches are in an alliance to modernise the game on the field of play and in its management structures. Off the pitch the most visible changes in the game, like the more comfortable grounds, the greater variety of merchandise, and more soccer on TV, express a conscious drive from the big clubs to sell their product to a more middle-class, or at least more affluent, audience.

There is great resentment among people who feel exploited by the clubs or who have been priced out of the game. Some club fanzines protest. But there is no reason to expect that gates and sales will drop off and so no reason to expect the clubs to lower their prices.

Like much else in the leisure industry, football is a developing market, offering substantial profits for the owners or shareholders of the biggest clubs. But football has not always been attractive to the money-men: making the industry profitable has been a battle in which interweaving processes and conflicts are still unfolding, actively reshaping the game — on the pitch, in the club shops and in the boardroom.

In the last half-decade these changes have rattled along apace. The future of soccer is still being fought over but the outline of the resolution to the current round of conflicts is probably visible.

The most exciting change has been on the pitch. For the lover of the 'beautiful game', the naked drive for profit rankles, but it surely has improved the quality of the spectacle.

Only three years ago it would have been unimaginable that so many players of the calibre of Ginola, Kinkladze, Bergkamp, Vialli and the great Ruud Gullit would play for English clubs. For the football lover even the names are a pleasure to conjure with, evoking memories of great feasts of international soccer where the British teams were donkeys against the tricksters who had skills seldom seen on home turf. These imports have helped clubs switch the presentation of soccer from a gritty, artless and masochistic game to one which oozes Euro-chic. Of course foreign stars have ▸

* Jane Ashworth ran a women's football team in north-east England and is writing a book about the experience.

enhanced the English game for many years, but not in the current numbers. The most influential import, Cantona, came before this trend began because he needed to leave France. But he is alone in this the latest crop of talent: the rest are not refugees from archaic, stubborn regimes which prefer obedience to creative flair. They are here by choice. It is a sign of the changing times that Cantona has found a home in English soccer. However, it is less surprising that Sheffield Wednesday and Leeds could not cope with him and that it was only at his third club — Manchester United — where he found a management far-sighted and flexible enough to set him free and make him captain in an FA Cup Final. Up to then Cantona had never captained a side: even his teachers thought him too risky to be the school skipper.

*"For the lover of the game, the naked drive for profit rankles, but it surely has improved the quality of the spectacle."*

But bringing English football up to date involves more than importing top-class players. There have been changes which go right down to the roots of the game, and a challenge to the footballing orthodoxy. In short, a change of direction by the FA.

The motor of change has been the pursuit of profit, marshalled in by a new breed of Chairman at the big clubs. Many extremely rich, and well-rooted in the business world of their region — often with businesses of their own which benefit from supplying or servicing the football club.

The money-men need managers like Keegan, Hoddle, Gullit and Gerry Francis to make the clubs competitive and qualify for the big money circuits in Europe. Conversely, these enlightened managers and coaches are attracted to the new breed of owners, who, unlike their predecessors, promise not to sell on the best players to balance the books. They recognise the potential profits to be made from the club, and so invest in the game. Their money and business know-how is needed by the ex-players to develop the stadia, market the merchandise, and pay to recruit attractive players.

The best club teams in Europe, and probably the best national teams too, play to a different style and pattern. In the run up to Euro '96 the England team has changed style, and the appointment of Hoddle to succeed Venables after the summer is an important moment of consolidation in the transformation of English soccer according to European models — a process first officially marked by the appointment of Terry Venables to the top job.

English football tactics had been ruled by the FA, which produced a series of 'scientifically proved' coaching videos and manuals. English Direct Play was better than Brazilian and continental European style soccer. The Direct Play theory of the game underpins the classically British execution of the 4-4-2 formation which requires players to move, pass and think in straight lines, as opposed to the oblique lines which continental players play to and look out for. It plays down the need for personal skills, and governs the way children are taught the game.

The story, which may be apocryphal, is that Hoddle's first act in charge at Stamford Bridge was to put a stop to any Chelsea side playing 4-4-2.

Hoddle has at last been recognised as one of the best football brains of his generation, though he only played 53 times for England. The old guard were too narrow-minded or factionally blind to build a team around a player with such flair and vision. Instead they chose to build the side around a different sort of world-class player, the gritty, determined and oh-so-English, Bryan Robson.

There is always the possibility that the old 442ers will stage some rearguard action, but it appears their back has been broken. The next key appointment within the FA is the Technical Director — who will be in charge of re-writing the coaching manuals and re-organising the coaching systems.

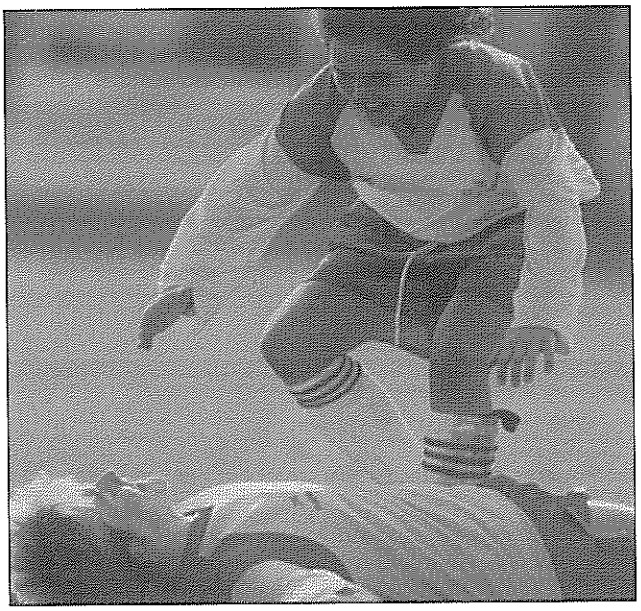
With the money-men behind them the ex-players seem to have a real chance of dragging English football into the 1990s, finally doing away with the dominance of football's equivalent of the 'old farts' in the rugby hierarchy whom Will Carling so famously offended.

The Brits have wised up to what the Europeans have known for a decade or more — all players should be able to control the ball, and keeping possession is the most certain way to prevent the opposition scoring. The debate is not over the most efficient way to play — whether 4-4-2 is better than a sweeper or a Christmas tree formation — but whether thinking in terms of a system is in and of itself a restricting framework of thought. It is hard to imagine the old guard of the FA getting its collective head around a postmodernist deconstruction of the game — but as the ex-players get their hands (and heads) on the institutions which reproduce players, they will try to copy the Ajax model and set about developing youngsters who are not ruined by too early an introduction to the 11-a-side game, nor by the coaches who rant, rave and demand muscular victory rather than displays of skills in boys who have barely reached puberty.

It is unlikely that the process has gone far enough in time to rescue the fortunes of the England team for these European Championships — but, as the dressing room revolt in the 1990 World Cup showed, many players themselves do know better than the style in which they have been forced to play suggests.

Ex-players like Lineker, Hoddle and Keegan know that this production line of young players has to change if they are to be part of a relaunched English soccer which holds its own on the European stage.

In the '70s and '80s the game was in crisis. The response to vio-



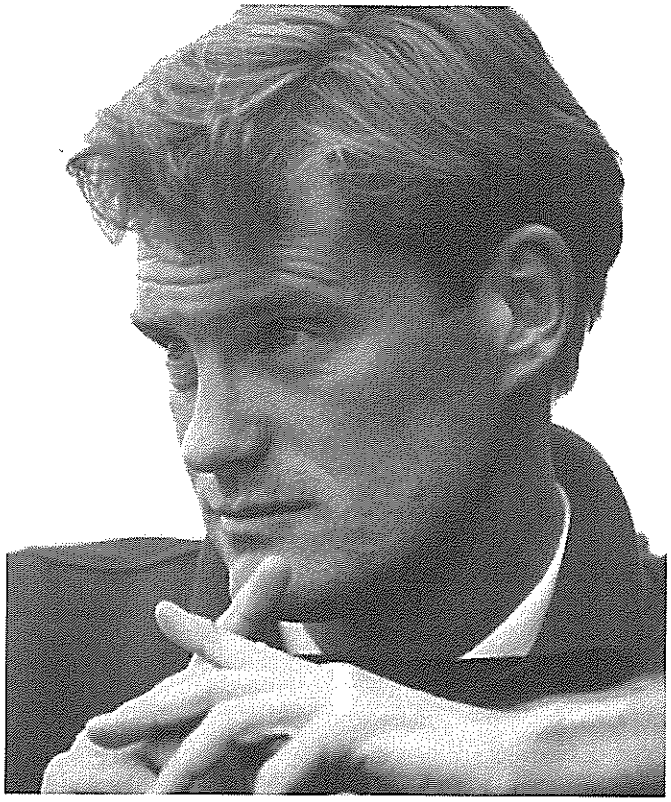
## The women's game

**WOMEN'S football and women's rugby are the fastest growing sports in the UK. Most of the FA Premier League clubs have a women's team as part of their football in the community programme.**

**At the top of the women's game is the FA Women's Premiership which divides into a Premier League and two first divisions — north and south. Underneath the Premiership are regional leagues which may have three or four divisions. There are also junior leagues.**

**The FA took over the Women's Football Association following a FIFA directive in 1992. In the absence of a league sponsor, with the Football Trust the FA are able to subsidise clubs in the Premiership. Sky Lifestyle channel sponsors the Women's FA Cup.**

**In England the women's game is unpaid but in Italy and Scandinavia it is professional and semi-professional. America won the World Cup on the strength of their collegiate game.**



**Chelsea lose their gaffer. England gain hope.**

lence and unpleasant or dangerous stadia was a turning point in the history of football. Both problems were bad for business, and were eroding the base of support for the game. After the disasters at Hillsborough, Bradford and Heysel, football had to bring itself up to standard. The grounds were manifestly old, unsafe and in need of refurbishment.

Sociologist Ian Taylor argues that the dilapidation of the grounds and the absence of government will to impose high standards before the disasters made it imperative were part of the decline in the quality of public life in Britain. Private enterprise was not geared up to provide safety and comfort. But the safety crisis was taking its toll. The gate for a top division club dropped from an average of 27,000 in 1978 to 18,000 in 1983. Bad press, reduced gate receipts, and high costs of policing demanded action from the club owners and football authorities.

*"The new fans can not be relied upon... they are consumers in the leisure industry."*

Most clubs were very heavily in debt by this time and had to redevelop their business to establish a financial even keel. Cleaning up the game led to the clubs beginning a process which changed the nature of the football supporter. They chose not to find the money through the Stock Market or banks but to make the fans pay — and so was born the drive to attract the 'new fan.'

No longer were the clubs satisfied with being the primary leisure pursuit of working-class men alone. The clubs wanted to attract a more affluent audience, of either gender, who could afford to buy more merchandise, pay higher admission prices and not start fights. Government also funded some of the capital works — with £200m via The Football Trust — which encouraged the return of the spectator and appealed to a more middle-class supporter.

The refurbishments were used by the clubs to justify increased admission prices. Sections of the working class — especially young people — were priced out. Although the crowds dropped in the early '80s, the income from gate receipts and season tickets rocketed up from a season's average for each top flight club from £291,000 in 1978 to £464,000 in 1985/6. The price rises have continued. In 1994 the average had increased to £1,515,000, with the big six clubs taking at least £5,379,000. The *Manchester Evening News* calculates that Old Trafford will take a million pounds per match now the stadium holds 55,000.

It is open to debate whether these changes ended hooliganism. It was on a downward trend even before the stadia were changed. Many fans who had run with the pack stopped doing so after the Heysel disaster in 1985, where 39 people died. Many report that the deaths pulled them up sharpish. The clubs were employing their own stewards, who did not wind up the fans as the police had done. Another factor which reduced hooliganism was increasingly sophisticated police surveillance, which almost guaranteed trouble-makers would be identified. In any case, football has become a fairly safe sport to watch: the number of arrests at matches almost halved in the ten years between 1984 and '94.

These refurbished stadia may not be appreciated by those who once stood on the terrace, but they are safer.

The 'new fans' whom the big clubs have been chasing have different attitudes and spending patterns from the old type. They are more likely to be season ticket holders. Since 1995 income from season tickets has exceeded income from gate receipts. The new fans can not be relied upon to support their team through thick and thin. They are consumers in the leisure industry — not fans.

The drive for the new target audience has had beneficial effects: it has required clubs to change their approach to attracting and servicing their fans. Past practice of only catering for white males has been superseded. There are now more women watching games and some grounds have crèches. Also, more Asian men have started going to matches. The number of spectators who earn more than £30,000 a year has increased.

It has not just been inside the stadia where English football has lagged behind. The big European clubs were quicker than the English to realise the potential of satellite TV — as when Silvio Berlusconi bought AC Milan and rapidly assimilated the club into his media empire — and this media power is completing the modernisation drive. The BBC and ITV had paid a relative pittance for broadcasting rights for the old first division, far less than the European clubs charge their TV networks. The Chief Executives of the big clubs, lead by David Dein of Arsenal and Alan Sugar of Spurs, revolted. Buying in the marketing and political expertise of Saatchi and Saatchi, the big clubs took their clubs out of the Football League and over to the FA to launch the Premiership.

The pseudo-democracy of the League and FA — where all clubs were voting members, giving a small club similar rights to a big club — was replaced, as the powerful clubs took control of their own destiny. They organised as a separate league under the FA's umbrella but in control of their own affairs, without reference to the interests of the smaller clubs. The axis of power shifted from football as a whole to those clubs which already had the money to do well.

To ease the breakaway there were smoke screens wafted — particularly the promise of reducing the number of matches to rest the players and so improve the chances of the national team. But that has barely happened. Whatever the false promises and ideological side-shows, the move was about the big clubs taking ▸

## Football focus

- In 1985 the average admission price to a top-flight game was £3.70, and £2 for a bottom division club. In 1994 admission to a Premier League club was £9.50, and £3.50 for a third division side. Manchester United's prices rose most dramatically from £3.50 in 1985 to £14 in 1993. Prices now can be in excess of £20.

- The FA Premier League Fan Survey shows that the income bracket most likely to approve of the stadia changes, and therefore most likely to watch more games, is £30,000 plus. All income brackets approve of the changes, but, as income decreases, so too does the likelihood of watching more matches since the changes. All income brackets say they watch more games since the stadia changes.

- Arrests at matches have gone down from a height of 7,000 in 1984 to just over 4,200 in 1994.

control of their own destiny, developing their own market and consolidating the changing role of supporters — from fans to consumers.

The FA was aware of how far the English game was financially slipping behind the rest of Europe, so were keen to go along with the changes. They were already discussing how to attract a better off, more middle-class audience for soccer — not just to sustain high ticket prices, replace volatile fans with the more sedate, and increase revenues from merchandising, but also for the TV negotiations. The more confidence advertisers have in Sky viewers buying their products, the more they will pay Sky and the more Sky will be willing to pay for broadcasting rights.

Within a couple of seasons of the launch of the Premiership, Sky TV and the BBC had together agreed to pay £304 million over five years for the right to broadcast games. Previously the BBC and ITV had paid about £80m. And during this time the value of the big clubs rocketed — most dramatically and observably Manchester United. United are probably the world's biggest sporting club — a long way from the best, and measured on the strength of the 1995/6 squad, which was good enough to become the first club to twice win the English double, possibly not even in Europe's top five. But the history of the club, its heroes — particularly the fallen heroes — and the large Mancunian diaspora, give United a brand recognition which exceeds probably every other club in the world.

In 1991 United was floated on the Stock Market, capitalised at £31m. Today the club is valued at £301m. The share price has risen from 52p to 335p. United can now afford the world-class players they need if they are to replicate their domestic success in European competition.

Now that the biggest clubs have upgraded their grounds, secured sell-outs for most matches, and are getting the hang of keeping and producing good players, they are planning to revisit the matter of broadcasting rights. Only four years on from the formation of the Premiership, the deal with Sky is now a hindrance to the ambitions of the big clubs. Within months rather than years the big clubs will attempt to launch club-specific TV channels: Manchester United, Arsenal, Newcastle, Liverpool, Spurs and maybe Leeds and Chelsea.

Just how quickly this next stage takes shape might hang on the decision of the Office of Fair Trading, which is currently reviewing the legality of the FA's Premiership. The BBC argue that the Premiership is an illegal cartel, restricting the free-market sale of broadcasting rights. The outcome of this review will affect the speed of change in English football. Before the club channels are set up, the clubs have first to regain the broadcasting rights of their matches back from the collective control of the League. The day the OFT review was announced share prices in Manchester United and Spurs leapt up.

If the Premiership is indeed deemed a cartel, and therefore clubs are prevented from collective negotiations, then this will be the go-ahead for the launch of club channels which will increase the division between rich and poor even within the Premier League. At the moment each club is guaranteed so many visits by Sky. While the most frequently broadcast does receive the most income, the deal spreads the riches across the Premier League and beyond into football as a whole. The smaller Premiership clubs will not take such a move lying down. They will fight to retain corporate negotiation, and they have a fairly strong hand: the big clubs need domestic competition, at least for the next few years as the pan-European leagues are established.

There are also technological problems — not every home has Sky or cable, and Sky's satellites are already on overload. But here Labour might bail them out. The deal Blair struck with BT, and which Tebbit blessed, will enhance the viability of the club-specific channels. BT has the technology in place to pump audio-visual data into every house with a phone connection in most areas of the UK. Currently BT are restrained from launching this service by the terms of privatisation, which gave their cable-company competitors ten years before BT could enter that market. Blair has promised to rescind that constraint and free BT to distribute television to a much wider audience than Sky and cable can reach.

The big clubs' plans to launch their own TV channels explains their diversification into other sports which do not attract a large crowd and therefore do not seem to be immediate money mak-

## Art, beauty, philosophy and football

By Richard Love

*"When you are taught beauty at an early age, it is very difficult to give it up. A good footballer is by nature a beautiful footballer."*

*"I imagine the ball to be alive, sensitive and responding to the touch of my foot, to my caresses, just like a woman with the man she loves."*

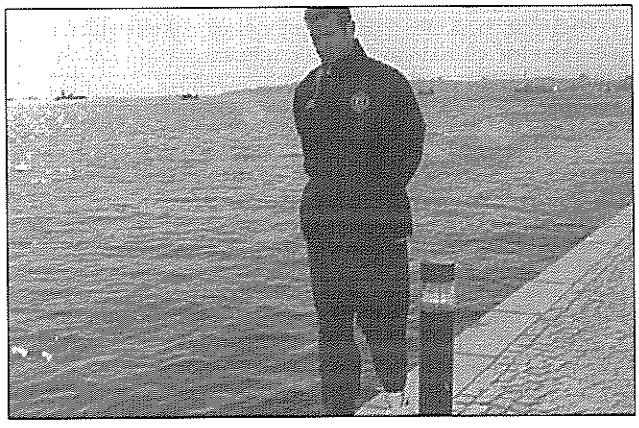
***Eric Cantona***

ERIC Cantona is probably the most entertaining and talented player in English football. As well as his obvious passion for the game he attempts to come across as an intellectual — if the coffee-table book *La Philosophie de Cantona* is anything to go by he is, at best, a light-weight intellectual.

The book is thoroughly entertaining. Unfortunately most of the entertainment is in its weakness. It's the kind of stuff you would expect to find in *Adrian Mole*, not in the work of a grown-up. The book is made up of short quotes, most of which are on the level of "I wish I never had to grow up."

However, amongst this kind of stuff you will find an insight into what makes this very talented player tick. He is dedicated to the idea that football should be beautiful to watch and that players should treat their sport not just as athletic activity but also as art.

On the pitch you can see what he means in practice. Not only is he a game winner, but he does it with such style and artistry it is a pleasure to watch — even for those who normally find football dull.



## Clubs with Tory connections

- **Blackburn Rovers**: Honorary President — Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven
- **Everton**: Director — Sir Philip Carter, Chair of Liverpool Conservative Association since 1985
- **Arsenal**: The Chair, Peter Hill-Wood, is also Director of Hambros Bank which gives £100,000 a year to the Tory Party.
- **Manchester City**: Director Andrew Thomas is Chair of Greenall Brewers, which has given £15,000 to the Tories since 1993.
- **Newcastle United**: Newcastle is a wholly owned subsidiary of Cameron Developments, which has given £100,000 to the Tories since 1989.


**Blair meets Keegan: let's hope it doesn't rub off**

ers. The technology which makes them possible also partly explains the new arenas — usually built with at least support from the locally active cable company, which has them wired for sound and vision. For a decade or more the big clubs have dabbled in promoting other sports. Now this is becoming an imperative. Newcastle United under the direction of Sir John Hall — recently made a Director of the Bank of England, just like Manchester United's Chair, Sir Roland Smith — is launching the Newcastle Sporting Club. The intention is to bring together a number of teams under the Newcastle United label — ice-hockey, basketball and rugby — and so make money from those consumers who do not like football, but who will respond to other sports. Hall wanted to build an arena next to the football ground to host the indoor sports, stage music events and produce copy for the United TV station. He ran into planning difficulties and was beaten to building an arena by Chas Chandler, the ex-Animal. The battle continues.

Hall wants to develop the ground and arena into a complex with shops and restaurants, and to enhance the existing museum, making the stadium a place of importance in its own right, not just somewhere to watch football.

Other clubs have the same idea. Manchester United are looking at building a theme park. Chelsea, who have been floated on the Stock Market in the last month, have plans to build a hotel as part of the Stamford Bridge complex.

For the money-men, however, there remains an apparently irreducible problem: football is a game, and there are losers.

In the current structures, losing the English League title — maybe on goal difference — denies access to the really big money in the European Super-league. And that is a loss of income which cannot be economically insured against. The answer to that dilemma is now being fought over on the European stage.

The big European clubs want to secure themselves regular European games and the enormous amounts of money they bring in from enhanced broadcasting fees — big European games are screened world-wide — and the widened market for merchandise. They want European competition with guaranteed access for their clubs — regardless of their domestic successes or failures. But football is a game with a tradition of on-pitch success opening doors to higher flights of the game. It simply goes against the grain — it does not seem right for there to be automatic entry into Europe for the financially big clubs who may have had a poor domestic season.

If the big clubs get their way then the irony is complete: the structures of the game would be changed to protect the investment of the big clubs. The game would lose its bite — there would be less hanging on each match. It would be rather decadent. No doubt there would be some routes for emerging clubs to join the top flight providing they can meet entry criteria — like a large enough stadium — and this will go some way towards placating opposition. But inclusion is not the problem for the big club. Relegation is the issue.

*"For the money-men there remains an irreducible problem: football is a game, and there are losers."*

The money of the TV companies has already started to shape the structure of the European competition. In 1987 Napoli sold the right to broadcast their European games, but they were knocked out in the first round. RAI, the state Italian TV company, was not impressed, having paid £2m for two games. Subsequently the European competitions were seeded to make sure the big clubs were — freak results aside — ensured a safe passage through to the later stages of the tournaments.

There are still many battles to be fought, and how far football can globalise itself on the back of improved media technology is not certain. World leagues are talked about in the *Financial Times* and by Berlusconi. But there may be a limit: it may be that the business requires fans to be able to actually go to matches to maintain interest.

For sure, as the game grows in money and influence, it will become once again the subject of government concern. Preparing for government, the Labour Party has produced a Charter for Football. Labour promises to streamline planning procedures to help clubs to build out-of-town stadia, to further control bad behaviour at grounds, and to encourage football in schools. The concessions to football supporters are a promise that they will have a representative on the ground licensing body, and exhortations to clubs to listen to the fans and not to exclude 'sectors of the community' by inequitable pricing. The Charter does not investigate the accountability of the boards to fans, participation by fans in decision making, or even the less tricky question of supporting the fans to develop the community programmes of the clubs.

In short, the Charter does not challenge the direction of the big clubs, which see the fans as little more than loyal consumers. It does not recognise that the fans see themselves as members of some type of association to which they are committed.

Out of this conflict — supporters as fans or consumers — will come change: supporters will be galvanised to fight for a greater say, or else the money-men's bottom line will increasingly dominate. ■

## Who owns the clubs?

MANCHESTER United and Spurs are listed on the Stock Market in their own right. Chelsea is listed through Chelsea Village, the company which owns the football club.

At most other clubs the Directors own the title-deeds.

## The richest backers of professional clubs

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Jack Walker** | *Blackburn* | 360m |
| **David Thompson** | *QPR* | 350m |
| **Alan Sugar** | *Spurs* | 80m |
| **Owen Oyston** | *Blackpool* | 50m |
| **Leslie Silver** | *Leeds* | 40m |
| **John Madejski** | *Reading* | 23m |
| **David Dein** | *Arsenal* | 23m |
| **Sir Jack Hayward** | *Wolves* | 20m |

Source: *The Independent* May 1993 quoted in William's *English Football Stadia After Hillsborough.*

# Reclaiming William Morris

By Nicholas Salmon

HOW Morris became a socialist is rather more complicated than is generally thought. Morris himself only made rare statements about how he became a socialist, spread out in his writings over 16 years. One of the things that finally convinced him was, ironically, John Stuart Mill's attack on Fourier's utopian socialism.

Before that, however, the crucial influence on him was the British social critics, such as Carlyle, Cobbett and Ruskin. They convinced him absolutely that capitalism as a system was wasteful, that it destroyed workers' enjoyment in their work, and that it destroyed artistic creation.

Morris entered politics as a Liberal, with the Eastern Question Association, set up against the Conservative Party's threat to go to war with Russia over the Balkans. He lost his belief in the Liberal Party as a result of their failure to act on this issue. Morris defended the small nationalities that were being attacked by the Turks, the Bulgarians in particular — he supported their right to independence from Turkish oppression — but the British Conservative government supported the Turks because they did not want the Russians to gain influence.

Morris joined the National Liberal League, which was a radical organisation, on the left of the Liberal Party. The failure of the Liberal government elected in 1880 to keep to any of its radical promises disillusioned him. He joined the Radical Union, a group of radical clubs on the very far left of the Liberal Party, but eventually became completely disillusioned with parliamentary politics.

Morris had been lecturing, attending meetings, going with delegations to see Gladstone and other Liberal leaders. He could have been elected a Liberal MP if he had pursued that course. He rejected conventional politics because he realised that parliament was only defending bourgeois interests.

## Biography

**1834**: Born into a wealthy middle-class family.
**1861**: Founds Morris & Co., the decorating business which accounts for most of his 20th century fame.
**1868-70**: Publishes "The Earthly Paradise", which makes him, at the time, better-known as a poet.
**1876**: Becomes Treasurer of the Eastern Question Association, a Liberal-oriented campaign against the threats of the then Conservative government to go to war against Russia.
**1883, January**: Joins the Democratic Federation, the first socialist group to develop in Britain since the collapse of Chartism in the 1850s. (It renames itself Social Democratic Federation, SDF, in August 1884). Studies Karl Marx's *Capital*.
**1884, December**: Splits off from the SDF with Eleanor Marx, Edward Aveling, Ernest Belfort Bax, and others, to form the Socialist League.
**1885-90**: Edits the Socialist League's paper *Commonweal*, and leads its agitation in street meetings and public lectures.
**1890, May**: Ousted by anarchists as editor of *Commonweal*.
**1890, December**: Leaves Socialist League, forms Hammersmith Socialist Society.
**1893**: With Henry Hyndman and George Bernard Shaw, writes *Manifesto of the English Socialists* in an unsuccessful effort to unite the various socialist groups.
**1894**: Reconciled with SDF.
**1896, October**: Dies.

## The movement Morris joined

THE modern British socialist movement really only began with the Democratic Federation in 1881. And even that, when it began, was not really socialist, but a combination of radical groups. It was only when Hyndman, who had read Marx, took it over, that it moved in a socialist direction. It was only in 1883, after Morris had joined, that it began to pass openly socialist resolutions.

Morris joined the Democratic Federation in January 1883 after he had attended a series of meetings which they held on possible stepping stones to socialism. He was elected treasurer of the Federation in the summer of 1883.

The whole of Morris's life was about enthusiasms. He was never one to sit around and say "let's see how it goes." When he took up dying, he went and got his hands dirty in the vats. He came from a very privileged background, but he became an artisan. He learned what it was to work. Whatever he did, he threw his whole person into it. He was a doer. That distinguished him from Ruskin, Carlyle and Cobbett, and to a certain extent from Marx and Engels, who were more satisfied to present their ideas in a theoretical manner rather than on the streets, at a practical level.

Morris was never going to sit down and theorise in the abstract. I think Hyndman was extremely pleased to "catch" Morris, who was nationally known as an author and designer, for the Democratic Federation. Probably Hyndman thought that Morris would be a figurehead, a name on the letterhead. But once Morris threw himself into something, he was absolutely dedicated. He was going to do everything he could, no holds barred.

Tension between Morris and Hyndman was inevitable. You could not have two such larger-than-life figures in the same organisation. It is also true that Morris was rather better accepted by the working-class members of the Democratic Federation than Hyndman. Many of the early members of the Democratic Federation were artisans rather than ordinary workers, and Morris appealed to them. He did not go around wearing a top hat like Hyndman. He wore blue serge. His hands were dirty from the dying vat.

Morris read Marx's *Capital* in 1883, and, contrary to what some people say, he was greatly influenced. In the Morris centenary exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is his copy of "Le Capital" — the French edition, because it had not yet been translated into English. Ironically, it has been lent to the museum by John Paul Getty, of all people. Anyone who tells you that Morris did not care about Marx only has to look at the annotations in that book. Morris never claimed to be an economist, but he certainly understood the Marxist theory of surplus value, and explained it in his own writings.

## The voice of toil

I heard men saying, Leave hope and praying,
All days shall be as all have been;
To-day and to-morrow bring fear and sorrow,
The never-ending toil between.

When Earth was younger mid toil and hunger,
In hope we strove, and our hands were strong;
Then great men led us, with words they fed us,
And bade us right the earthly wrong.

Go read in story their deeds and glory,
Their names amidst the nameless dead;
Turn them from lying to us slow-dying
In that good world to which they led;

Where fast and faster our iron master,
The thing we made, for ever drives,
Bids us grind treasure and fashion pleasure
For other hopes and other lives.

Where home is a hovel and dull we grovel,
Forgetting that the world is fair;
Where no babe we cherish, lest its very soul perish;
Where mirth is crime, and love a snare.

Who now shall lead us, what god shall heed us
As we lie in the hell our hands have won?
For us are no rulers but fools and befoolers,
The great are fallen, the wise men gone.

I heard men saying, Leave tears and praying,
The sharp knife heedeth not the sheep;
Are we not stronger than the rich and the wronger,
When day breaks over dreams and sleep?

Come, shoulder to shoulder ere the world grows older!
Help lies in nought but thee and me;
Hope is before us, the long years that bore us
Bore leaders more than men may be.

Let dead hearts tarry and trade and marry,
And trembling nurse their dreams of mirth,
While we the living our lives are giving
To bring the bright new world to birth.

Come, shoulder to shoulder ere earth grows older!
The Cause spreads over land and sea;
Now the world shaketh, and fear awaketh
And joy at last for thee and me.

***William Morris***

For Morris, Marx gave the scientific explanation for something which he had already come to by himself. Morris said that in medieval times the artisan was part of a string of art, right from the bottom to the top. Feudal society, despite all its problems, did have obligations and rights. Though Morris never said that feudal society was an ideal, he did believe that workers were less alienated from their work then. And in the historical sections of *Capital* he would have found Marx showing how human history is always moving on — anyone who believes that there will never be another stage beyond capitalism only needs to look back to feudalism. Feudalism moved on to capitalism, and capitalism will move on to something else.

Anyone who believes that Morris had no idea of historical determinism should read *A Dream of John Ball*. John Ball is a peasant leader, fighting a revolution in which he hopes that the people will win fellowship, but in fact it will lead to a situation where people are in competition with each other under a capitalist state.

What differentiated Morris so radically from his teachers, like Carlyle and Ruskin, who were backward-looking and hostile to democracy? Part of it was his reading of scientific socialism. One of Ruskin's biographers said that Ruskin, Carlyle and Cobbett prescribed, but they never offered any source of action, any way of changing society. They looked at the situation of the working class, but not at how the working class could change that situation. Ruskin's vague attempts to change society were farcical enterprises like the Guild of St George.

Morris realised very early that society would not be changed by such partial schemes. He became very critical of the cooperative movement for precisely that reason. Much as he admired Robert Owen, he believed that Owen was misguided in believing that you could set up ideal communities within the existing structure.

Morris came to reject any "palliatives" within the existing system. The criticism of Ruskin and Carlyle was so powerful that it convinced him that the whole system was corrupt. It was no good trying to fiddle with the system. Their criticism said that capitalist conditions were terrible, and there should be some sort of moral crusade or some of Carlyle's "heroes" to change them. Morris concluded, even before he read Marx, that it was necessary to get rid of the capitalist system.

Morris was interested in handicrafts, primarily, not the fine arts, and he realised that the handicrafts had been created by working people. The working people had been disenfranchised from art. Before 1883 Morris believed that the middle class could redeem themselves. If they stopped buying mass-produced goods and bought artistic goods, if they would demand only beautiful goods, then they could bring about a regeneration. But after reading *Capital* and other socialist books, around 1882-3, Morris always looked to the generation of class consciousness among the working class to change society.

Exactly how Morris came to make the leap to seeing the degraded, beaten-down working class of the 1880s as the force that could remake society is a difficult question. Nobody has really come up with the explanation. E P Thompson in his book *William Morris, Romantic to Revolutionary* talks about Morris crossing a "river of fire" to the working class.

Reading Marx influenced him, and of course other members of the Democratic Federation may have influenced him too. Hyndman, for example, knew Marx: he had plagiarised some of Marx's theories without acknowledging them, and consequently Marx had fallen out with Hyndman. That was unfortunate, because if the link could have been maintained between Hyndman and Marx it might have done a lot of good for the early socialist movement in the 1880s. In fact, Hyndman became idiosyncratic in his views, to a certain extent, in the 1880s, although he also orchestrated the socialists' unemployment agitation of the mid-1880s which was extremely successful and really frightened the bourgeoisie for a time.

The Irish question was very important for the early Democratic Federation, and it was crucial for Morris too. Ireland got more column space from Morris in *Commonweal*, the socialist paper he edited between 1885 and 1890, than any other issue. Morris believed that a revolution in Ireland would be a great blow to bourgeois rule. It would disrupt the Empire and landlordism. For a time, though he did change his attitude on this, he felt that an Irish revolution had the potential to be a proletarian revolution. He believed that the socialist movement in Britain could take great hope from the way that working people in Ireland were organising themselves in revolt against the capitalist system. Many of his articles warned the Irish to make certain, after Ireland got independence, that they nationalised the land and did not allow the landlords to retain power. He believed that not only should Ireland have its independence, as a matter of course, but also that the revolution could be a proletarian revolution.

On the Jewish question there are perhaps half a dozen examples in Morris's writings of the traditional music-hall anti-

**Eleanor Marx**


**Hammersmith Branch of the Socialist League**

semitic stereotypes, usually derived from Dickens. But in that period it is difficult to find anyone who did not use those stereotypes. They were part of the culture. Morris was not anti-semitic. He subscribed to a fund for Jewish refugees. He worked with Jews who were a crucial element in the socialist movement in East London.

The socialist movement in that period was open to debate. In *News from Nowhere* Morris parodies a meeting of the Socialist League. There are six members there, and six points of view, including four different philosophies of anarchism. The early socialist movement in this country was all about arguments and disputes. Often the socialists would be better at arguing against each other than against capitalism.

## Splits and Sunday socialism

IN late 1884, the Democratic Federation — which had been renamed Social Democratic Federation, SDF — split. Morris and others formed a new group, the Socialist League. It was a complicated split. Morris wanted to keep the SDF together, but Hyndman took over control of *Justice*, the SDF magazine, and refused to allow the Executive of the SDF to influence what he put into it.

When Morris had first joined the SDF, he still listened to the idea of palliatives or stepping stones. He supported the eight-hour day and railway nationalisation. Gradually, during the course of 1884, he began to have serious doubts about palliatives. They were taking people away from what he called the central issues — organising and educating the workers to take over the means of production.

Even if palliatives were granted, the capitalists would just take something away somewhere else. Palliatives meant just going round and round in circles. If palliatives worked, they would create a middle class, or the *embourgeoisement* of a section of the working class. In a sense, that is what we have at the moment: if you buy enough people off with tax cuts, you can blur the class distinction and get enough people in the middle who will act as a buffer. Morris came to believe that parliament was there for only one purpose: to protect the capitalist system. If a socialist party went into parliament, it would end up defending the system it was there to attack. It would be corrupted by the parliamentary system.

Morris was gradually drifting away from the position Hyndman maintained (though sometimes inconsistently) on using parliament and struggle for palliatives as stepping stones to revolution.

Morris had suspicions of Hyndman personally, too. Engels was in the background, orchestrating the Eleanor Marx/Edward Aveling faction. Engels did not think that the SDF was a Marxist organisation, and he was probably working towards a split.

So gradually some people were siding with Morris, others with Hyndman. Morris tried to keep the two sides together. Letters that have come to light recently show that Morris never intended to leave the SDF, but he seems to have been persuaded in the last few days before the split. A rumour was put round while he was on a speaking tour in Scotland that he did not know anything about Marx and surplus value. It really annoyed Morris that his credibility was being undermined. He stormed back to London. He and his supporters won the vote on the Executive, but then Morris led them out of the SDF, so Hyndman won. He retained the whole organisation of the SDF.

Some people remarked that Morris had won, but he had ended up with all the malcontents. He started off on a bad footing with the Socialist League. He had become the leader of a faction that he did not want to lead. He had no fundamental argument with Hyndman, but he saw the justice of the people who did have an argument with Hyndman, and he sided with them because he saw that Hyndman was not giving way at all.

The split was a catastrophe for both sides. It weakened the SDF. The Socialist League had a certain amount of success in the first couple of years, but never really got going.

The first few issues of the Socialist League's paper, *Commonweal*, were absolutely stunning, with contributions from people like Shaw, Engels, Aveling, Bax... Morris, as editor, had a tremendous standing in the movement.

Morris's own *Notes on News* formed a commentary on each week in politics from a Marxist perspective. He had opinions on everything, from the Channel Tunnel to Jack the Ripper. Many of the issues discussed then are the same as those of today — unemployment, poverty, Ireland, imperialistic wars... Anyone who says that Morris's writing was medieval and archaic should read those columns.

In the 19th century, capitalism was still largely a lot of small firms competing with each other. Morris argued that capitalism would be increasingly dominated by larger and larger businesses competing for larger and larger profits, on a world market. He failed to anticipate technological change. But much of what he wrote is still fresh today. Today we are going back to social conditions that Morris described. All the small gains that have been made are being systematically taken away again. We have more in common with the 19th century now, with the systematic destruction of the Health Service, the underfunding of education, the withdrawal of working-class rights, than we had twenty years ago.

The same bourgeois myths are spread today as were spread a hundred years ago. Yet people believe them! That's why there has to be another attempt, another drive to change people's attitudes!

Morris was a high-profile character who got a lot of good publicity for the socialist movement. The bourgeois press regarded him as a bit of a crank, so they reported his meetings, which was useful propaganda.

Virtually every Sunday he made one or two open-air speeches in the East End of London. In addition, over the seven years he was really active in the movement, from 1883 to 1890, he gave an average of something like one formal lecture a week, and not just in London — in Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield, Dublin, Scotland... He was a very public figure.

Almost single-handed he created the Socialist League branches in many areas by his public speaking. In Norwich, for example, where I come from, the Socialist League branch became one of the most influential in the country. On one visit there Morris spoke to ten thousand people in the market square.

That was during the Free Speech campaign, to establish the right of socialists to speak on the streets. Morris played a big role in that. Whenever a socialist meeting — even an SDF meeting — was broken up by the police, Morris would go the next week to speak in the same place. Because Morris was so well-known, the police probably would not interfere. He was arrested once, but only fined a nominal amount.

One thing we must say for the socialists of that period — Hyndman, Morris, Shaw, all of them — is that the profile that socialism had by the end of the 1880s, compared to what it had at the beginning of the 1880s, showed that they managed to educate people extremely well. Morris said that by the late 1880s you could go into the East End of London and talk to anyone about socialism, and they would know what you were talking about. Every time Morris went into the streets, small boys would shout "Socialist Morris."

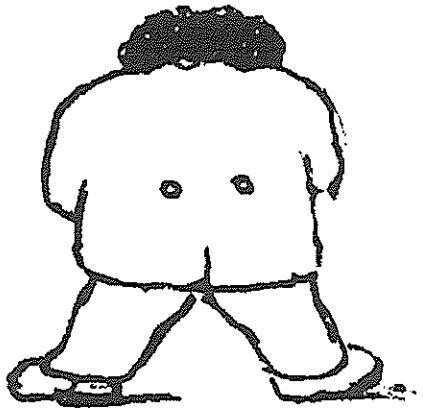
But, as Morris himself said, the job was first to educate the

workers on the need for socialism, and then to organise them to achieve it; and, as far as the Socialist League was concerned, they had not organised the workers to do anything.

The Socialist League supported the SDF's unemployment agitation — which was aimed at "palliatives" as well as arguing for revolution — but in a very lukewarm fashion. Morris thought that Hyndman was using the unemployed agitation to engineer riots — using the working class to promote his political position. Morris said that it was no good having unorganised riots. The people had to be organised so that they knew what they were doing. Socialists had to educate them first.

The manifesto of the Socialist League was drawn up by Morris and Bax. It was an anti-parliamentary manifesto, a very "purist" Marxist manifesto. Aveling and Eleanor Marx drew up another document which they wanted the League to adopt, which involved entering local government and seeking ameliorative reforms. That was rejected at the first annual meeting of the Socialist League in 1885, which immediately alienated Aveling and Marx, with Engels in the background. Right from the very beginning, there was the same division that had been present in the SDF. Bax, too, moved increasingly to a parliamentary view. Morris had to rely on the anarchists' support to maintain the anti-parliamentary approach. Gradually, the others left, Aveling, Marx, and Bax, going back to the SDF. Finally, in 1890, the anarchists took over the Socialist League and pushed Morris out, leaving him with a small group, the Hammersmith Socialist Society.

In 1883-4, Morris believed that he could bring about the revolution in his own lifetime. Around 1886, I think, he came round to the idea that there would not be a revolution in his lifetime. Ironically, it was because of the unemployed agitation of the SDF. The fact that the agitation often degenerated into riots convinced him that there was a long job of education and organisation still to do, and Bloody Sunday, in November 1887, when Trafalgar Square demonstrations were broken up by the police, confirmed him in what he had already decided, partly also, I suppose, because of the organisational problems of the Socialist League. When Morris revised *News from Nowhere*, between 1890 and 1891, he put the date of the future revolution back 50 years.



**"Morris the outsider", by his lifelong friend Edward Burne-Jones**

Morris always, to the end of his life, believed that there must be a working-class revolution which brings the means of production and distribution into the hands of the working class, and that the capitalist system must be destroyed. But after 1887 his debate became less with the parliamentarists, and more with the anarchists. He did not believe that you could have a society where you could have no social control whatsoever.

If you read the section on "How the Change Came" in *News from Nowhere* (1890), you will see that palliatives do not play a significant role in how he saw the revolution coming about. His views continued to develop after 1890. For one thing, he tried to bring the various fragments of the socialist movement together. The SDF, the Fabians, and the Hammersmith Socialist Society formed a joint committee in 1893 which Morris chaired to try to bring about a united socialist party. It was never going to work, but he, Hyndman and Shaw wrote a *Manifesto of the English Socialists* as a compromise document. Morris was keen to get the newly-formed Independent Labour Party involved, but Hyndman would not countenance it because he did not believe that the ILP was a socialist organisation.

Morris acknowledged in the late 1880s and the 1890s that the New Unionism was proving that the working class could get organised and successfully gain concessions. The Local Government Act of 1888 meant that socialists could get elected in local government. Morris came to accept that this sort of effort for reforms might be an inevitable experiment that would have to be gone through before the workers could go on to revolutionary principles.

Morris always warned against the danger that "the society of inequality might accept quasi-socialist machinery, and work it for the purpose of upholding that society in a somewhat shorn condition", but by 1893 he had shifted quite a bit from his old "purism." He was actively campaigning on behalf of socialist candidates in elections.

## Reassessing the unions

MORRIS has often been criticised for his lack of support for the trade unions. But you have to understand that Morris was an older man in the socialist movement of his time. The trade unions that he had seen in the 1860s and 1870s were Liberal organisations of the aristocracy of labour. It took him some time to see that new unions were coming up, led by socialists like Tom Mann, which were organising workers and winning concessions. When he wrote *News from Nowhere* in 1890, the trade unions did not play a part in the story. When he revised the novel in 1891, the trade unions did play a part. He became interested in the idea of the general strike. He learned from the workers — that the workers themselves could organise and be successful. Morris learned from the SDF, too. He was reconciled with it in 1894.

In the Socialist League William Morris became like John the Baptist, speaking in the wilderness. He was telling people: don't vote, don't get involved in elections, don't get involved in cooperatives, don't do this, don't do that. What *do* you do? That was the dilemma of the Socialist League. People want to do something, in immediate activity, when they become socialists.

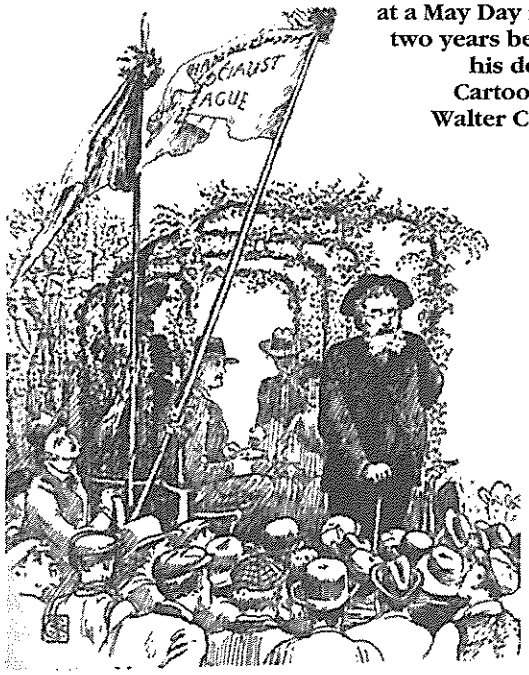
Morris never solved that problem when he was centrally active in the movement. He then realised, in later years of reflection, that he had made a mistake. Trade union agitation had been proved to be successful. It was a way of organising the workers.

The bourgeoisie did not remain static in this period, either. They started to say: "We are all socialists now." They tried to hijack socialist ideas in perverted form, for their own purposes. What could be regarded as progressive pieces of legislation were passed, for example, the laws creating parish councils and then county councils. Perhaps Morris's anti-parliamentarism partly reflected the fact that the suffrage was still very limited. In 1886 Morris commented that he had seven votes himself: he could vote in Merton, where he had his factory, in London, where he had his showroom, in Kelmscott, as a member of Oxford University... and large numbers of workers had no vote.

Morris was not a utopian socialist, but he was always contrasting what society would be like after the revolution with how it was then. He did that for simple educational reasons. Faced with a crowd of workers, he said, you could spout details about surplus value to them, but they would not listen. If you deliberately juxtaposed "how we live and how we might live", then you could encourage a great leap of imagination after the future. Most of his later lectures, after 1887 especially, are on that theme. They are still fresh and relevant today. Nowadays, we do not talk about what is going to happen after the revolution. We're always talking about how it is going to be achieved, whereas Morris was always talking about a vision of the future.

Morris argued that from Marx and scientific socialism you could derive some picture of what would happen in the future. For example, once you get rid of wage-slavery, that releases tremendous resources.

A lot of *News from Nowhere* is based on the medieval vision that Morris always liked, and a lot of it is a bit dodgy. All the people can speak five or six languages, yet you never see anyone being taught anything. What you first see women doing is acting as waitresses and serving in shops, which seems to me to be precisely the sort of thing they do today. Morris did tend to think that




**Morris speaking at a May Day rally two years before his death. Cartoon by Walter Crane**

women should be womanly and men should be manly. As on the Jewish question, he reflected his times.

Yet a lot in *News from Nowhere* is very modern, too. Despite what is sometimes said, it is not a future without machines. Railways are being replaced by electric-powered barges, for example.

In his later years Morris was isolated. He had lost control of the Socialist League. He ended up as the leader of an inconsequential small socialist grouping, the Hammersmith Socialist Society, which was really more of a debating club than an effective organisation. In 1891, and again in 1893, he was seriously ill.

Robert Blatchford, in the *Clarion*, urged Morris to become one of the leaders of the ILP. If Morris had been a younger man, and he had been fit, he could have become one of the first ILP MPs. His position in the early labour movement would have been entirely different.

In fact, he had very little to do with the ILP. He regarded himself, I think, as on the opposite pole of the socialist movement from the ILP, but he was the person who tried to get the ILP involved in the joint committee in 1893. Maybe, if there had been a socialist labour party set up in 1893, it might have been influenced much more actively by the Marxist tradition than in fact the ILP and the Labour Party were.

## A reputation hijacked

ONE thing we will get over and over again in this centenary year is the myth that because Morris had lots of money, he couldn't be a socialist. But you need to have one or two William Morrises with money and spare time to get the movement going. In the 1880s Morris was subsidising the movement with vast sums of money. He became quite hard-up at one point.

The myth that Morris's socialism was only a passing fancy started as early as his obituaries. When he died in 1896, he had been largely out of public socialist activity for five years, because of ill-health and being confined to a small group. Most of the obituaries, apart from those in the socialist press, mentioned his socialism but concentrated on him being a poet, craftsman and designer.

The first biography — apart from one, not very important, by Aylmer Vallance — was by J W Mackail, in 1899. It was a travesty, because Mackail had not known Morris in his socialist period, and he did not know much about socialism either. Morris the socialist came second or third to Morris the artist, designer and poet.

Morris's writings were still printed a great deal in working-class publications. My grandfather was an organiser for the AUCE, forerunner of USDAW, and in that union's paper, *New Dawn*, in the 1910s and '20s, there is quite a lot of Morris — an abridged version of *News from Nowhere*, some of his socialist poems, and so on. But the memory of Morris the socialist had been sidelined into sections of the labour movement, and erased in mainstream culture by Morris the artist and designer.

Then a dreadful thing happened with the *Collected Works*, published in 1910-15. They were edited by William Morris's daughter May, who was sympathetic to her father's socialism, but because of editorial control over her none of Morris's journalism and very few of his socialist writings, lectures and manifestos appeared in the *Collected Works*.

If all of Morris's socialist writings had been included, the *Collected Works* would have been at least half as long again. May Morris tried to rectify the shortcoming in 1936, when she put together two further volumes called *William Morris: Artist, Writer, Socialist*, one of which was another volume of his socialism. But once you had a *Collected Works* with almost no socialism in it, most writers were going to go no further than that.

Mackail was married to the daughter of Morris's old friend Edward Burne-Jones, who had no sympathy with Morris's socialism whatsoever. And the Burne-Jones family were directly related to Stanley Baldwin, the Tory prime minister. In 1934 Stanley Baldwin opened the exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum to celebrate 100 years since Morris's birth, and neither he nor the exhibition mentioned Morris's socialism at all. In just 38 years, Morris's socialism had been written out of history.

But people on the left began to look at Morris again. Middleton Murry was the first, in 1932, to reassert Morris's Marxism. Robin Page Arnot, a member of the Communist Party, wrote *William Morris, A Vindication*, in 1934.

The next major book was E P Thompson's *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, published in 1955 and revised in 1977. Our view of Morris today is pretty well as Thompson described him. Paul Meier wrote *William Morris: the Marxist Dreamer* (French edition 1972, English 1978), which is a strange book. He tries to create a Marxist orthodoxy and fit Morris into it — to establish that everything that Morris wrote was influenced by having seen documents written by Marx and Engels. Since some of those documents had not been published in English, and some of them had not been published at all, this relies on Morris having seen them at Engels' house or via Engels and Bax, although we only know of Morris meeting Engels four or five times. The approach devalues Morris as a thinker, implying that Morris himself could not possibly have thought through a paper bag and that everything he wrote must have been derived from someone else.

It was only in 1994 that I managed to publish Morris's political writings from *Commonweal*. This year I have brought out the journalism. That doubles what was available in the *Collected Works*. There are still all the lectures to come.

Morris wrote out all his lectures, and on the back of the manuscript there are always notes of the questions people asked and how best to reply. Will genius be destroyed in a socialist society? Will individuality be crushed? You can also see how Morris changed his lectures depending on whether he was speaking to a middle-class or a working-class audience.

Despite what's been published, we will get all the old myths repeated this year. Morris was not a Marxist; Morris was not really a socialist; Morris would have supported the Green Party. He would not have supported anything of the sort! He would have said that you cannot have environmental improvements or conservation within a capitalist system. You have to have a revolution. We have an abominable environment because we have a capitalist system.

It is up to the socialists to rediscover Morris's socialism. We should stop looking at his designs. They are not going to live on. The designs are Victorian. His ideas are not. They are ideas for the 21st century.

Socialism has gone in cycles. There have been periods when it has gone down and periods when it has risen. It will rise again. And it is essential that when it does, Morris is taken seriously. There has been a systematic attempt to demean Morris as a political thinker, and it is about time it was turned round.

● *Nicholas Salmon was talking to Martin Thomas and Sean Matgamna. Nicholas Salmon has edited Morris's* Political Writings *and* Journalism *(Thoemmes Press, 1994 and 1996), and is the next editor of the William Morris Society* Journal.

# Communism, Stalinism, and the British General Strike

By Stan Crooke

TAKING its name from a union bureaucrat's complaint about a "minority of troublemakers", the National Minority Movement (NMM) was formally established in August 1924 as a rank-and-file trade union organisation.

The founding conference was attended by over 270 delegates, claiming to represent some 200,000 workers. It defined the "aims and objects" of the NMM as:

"To organise the working masses of Great Britain for the overthrow of capitalism, the emancipation of the workers from oppressors and exploiters, and the establishment of a Socialist Commonwealth.

"To carry on a wide agitation and propaganda for the principles of revolutionary class struggle... and against the present tendency towards social peace and class collaboration, and the delusion of the peaceful transition from capitalism to socialism."

Between its founding conference in 1924 and the General Strike of 1926 the NMM grew substantially. 443 delegates attended its 1925 conference, and 547 delegates attended the following year's conference.

At its height, the NMM claimed to represent 957,000 workers. Unfortunately, the real figure was a lot lower: a union branch's membership would be counted three times over if the branch itself, the local union district committee, and the local Trades Council all sent delegates to a NMM conference.

Moreover, support for the NMM was very unevenly spread, both in terms of unions and geographically.

Only amongst miners, engineers and, to a much lesser degree, transport workers did the NMM enjoy a solid base of support. Geographically, support for the NMM was concentrated primarily in London, Sheffield, and parts of Scotland and Wales.

Yet the early years of the NMM are an important source of lessons — both positive and negative — for revolutionaries in our trade union work.

The driving force behind the NMM was the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), founded in 1921 as the product of the fusion of a number of small socialist organisations. It was a revolutionary party.

Modelling itself (even if not always successfully) on Lenin's Bolshevik Party which had achieved victory in Russia, the CPGB embodied a new approach to the struggle for revolutionary politics.

Prior to the CPGB's foundation, most socialist organisations in this country had been propagandistic: instead of actively intervening in the class struggle, they made passive propaganda about the need for socialism.

Their approach to politics is summed up by the following description of their public meetings (which were usually their only form of public activity):

"The speeches usually took the form of a general statement of socialist aspirations, a general criticism of capitalism and its evils, and a special application to current happenings — particularly the doings of the local borough or town council."

Consequently, such socialist organisations took little interest in the trade unions and workers' industrial struggles. The only exception to this was the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), which did have a major orientation to workplace struggles.

**Strikers in Leamington Spa march in protest**

But the SLP suffered from a major weakness of its own: syndicalism. It believed that strike action and industrial union organisation alone would be enough to achieve socialism.

This fundamental difference between the CPGB and its predecessors was summed up by J. T. Murphy, a leading figure in both the CPGB and also the NMM, after attending an international congress of Communist Parties in 1920:

"Instead of thinking that a socialist party was merely a propaganda organisation for the dissemination of socialist views, I now saw that a real socialist party would consist of revolutionary socialists who regarded the party as a means whereby they would lead the working class in the fight for political power."

This new insight into the nature and role of the revolutionary party underpinned the CPGB's approach to work in the unions.

Party members were not to be a mere "ginger group" in the unions, pushing union leaders to the left. Their task was to mobilise workers on the basis of class struggle politics as part of the fight to achieve a revolutionary leadership of the workers' movement.

Sectarian and syndicalist prejudices had not been completely eliminated amongst the party membership. As one party member later recalled:

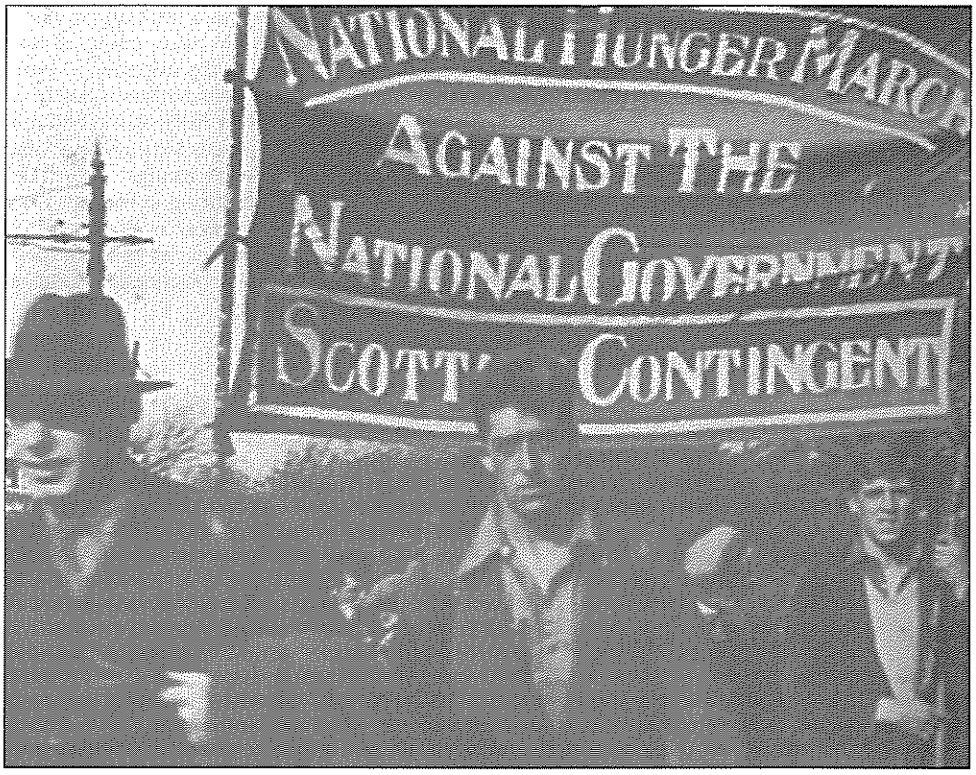
"Considerable time and energy had to be expended to fight down the belief that there was no room for a movement dealing with immediate and 'narrow' economic issues, that it was a reformist conception.

* Stan Crooke's account of the British General Strike of 1926 appeared in WL31.

"(Some members believed) that such an organisation would stand in front of and hide the face of the Party from the workers. Sneering descriptions of the NMM were given in the Party as being 'an attempt to dress a red man in a pink cloak'."

There was thus a constant tension in the trade union work of the CPGB in the early to mid 1920s and, by extension, the NMM itself.

Another, far more powerful, influence was at work as well. The CPGB looked to Moscow for political guidance. As Stalin consolidated his grip on power in the Soviet Union, the political guidance which the CPGB received was based increasingly upon class collaboration rather than class confrontation.




**A later incarnation of the CP, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement**

## Early years of the Minority Movement

BUT in 1924 the NMM signalled a new approach. It opened up the possibility of united action by CPGB members and union militants outside the ranks of the party in a joint struggle against both the capitalists and also the "labour lieutenants of capital" in the union bureaucracy.

As NMM National Secretary Pollitt put it: "It was necessary to make a decisive turn towards mass work in the factories, trade unions and working-class organisations, and to try to end the old sectarian traditions of the British revolutionary movement once and for all."

The CPGB had already begun such an approach prior to the creation of the NMM as a national organisation.

In 1922 the party had taken the lead in organising a series of "Back to the Unions" conferences as part of its "Stop the Retreat" campaign. The aim was to reverse the fall in union membership resulting from the employers' offensive and from the repeated betrayals by trade union leaders.

In the early years of the NMM, particular emphasis was placed upon the creation of powerful Trades Councils which would function as local general staffs of the working class: "By joint activities of the unions and Trades Councils (we can) create powerful nuclei around which the masses will gather."

The NMM campaigned for all union branches and district committees to affiliate to Trades Councils, and also called for a change in the structures of Trades Councils: they should accept direct workshop representation, and their right to send delegates to TUC congresses should be restored.

Affiliation to the National Federation of Trades Councils (initiated by the CPGB in 1923) was another campaigning focus of the NMM. As a result of such initiatives, the NMM itself won the affiliation of over 50 Trades Councils in the period 1924-26.

Arguably, the CPGB overestimated the potential of Trades Councils. And by the time of the General Strike it was certainly using its influence to ensure Trades Councils meekly fell into line behind the TUC.

Even so, there is some basis in reality for the NMM's claim that it was "the first organised movement... to draw attention to the importance and real role of Trades Councils in the labour movement."

Similar considerations apply to the NMM's call for increased powers for the TUC General Council. The political validity of this demand should not be obscured by the later failure of the NMM to challenge the role played by the General Council in the General Strike.

Well before the establishment of the CPGB many militants and socialists had advocated greater powers for the TUC General Council and its transformation into a "general staff of labour."

The concentration of capital demanded that the labour movement should concentrate its forces and break away from trade union sectionalism. As one NMM pamphlet put it, a TUC "General Staff" would:

"Mobilise and concentrate all the forces of the working class movement for the purpose of opposing a united class front to the united capitalist enemy... Sectional fighting is doomed, only conscious *class* fighting can be of use."

But the CPGB and NMM did, at least initially, recognise that increased powers for the General Council could be used to police the union membership in the interests of capitalism, unless those powers were subject to rank-and-file control and were used in pursuit of the class struggle.

This was clearly spelt out in a resolution passed at the NMM's founding conference. If the General Council was to become a "Workers' General Staff" rather than a "machine of the capitalists", what was necessary was:

"In the first place and fundamentally, to develop a revolutionary class consciousness amongst the trade union membership, and in the second place to so alter the constitution of the General Council as to ensure that those elected thereon have the closest contact with the workers."

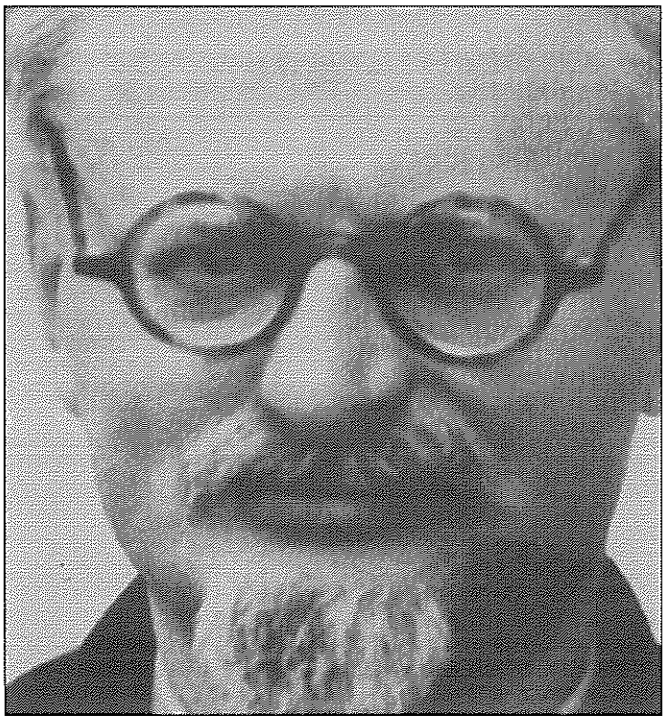
## "All power to the General Council"

BEFORE long, however, the qualifications and safeguards linked to the demand for increased powers for the General Council slipped into the background, and then out of sight, in the agitation of the CPGB and the NMM.

The 1925 conference of the NMM, for example, again called for more powers for the General Council, but added only as a vague afterthought that such powers should be used "to fight more effectively the battles of the workers."

The CPGB itself collapsed into wishful thinking: "The new General Council (of 1925) will simply *have* to prosecute more vigorously the fight on behalf of the workers... The mass pressure from behind will force even then (the right-wingers on the General Council) to toe the line."

Hardy, a leading figure in the NMM, displayed a similar attitude of political blindness when questioned about the wisdom of the ▸



**Leon Trotsky criticised the Stalinst policy in the unions**

slogan "All power to the General Council" in March 1926:

"Should they use that power wrongly, it only means that we have got another additional task before us of forcing them in the right direction, which direction they will ultimately have to take."

By the time of the General Strike itself, two months later, the CPGB had completely turned its back on its earlier understanding of how to raise the question of increased powers for the General Council. Now the role of the CPGB was to be a dogsbody:

"Our party does not hold the leading position in the trade unions. It is not conducting the negotiations with the employers and the government. It can only advise and place its forces at the service of the workers — led by others."

With the NMM's campaigning for industrial unionism and workshop committee too, positive initiatives foundered on the rocks of deference to the union bureaucracy.

From its founding conference onwards, the NMM campaigned to reorganise trade unions so that each industry was represented by one union. Divisions between workers in different unions in the same industry could thus be broken down.

The achievement of industrial unions, a long-standing objective of revolutionaries and syndicalists well before the creation of the NMM, would help bring about a unified workers' movement and thereby strengthen the forces of labour in the class struggle.

Campaigning for industrial unionism meant an emphasis on campaigning at rank-and-file level. This had been recognised by the unofficial shop stewards' movement during the 1914-18 war. It always emphasised that "unity from below" was the precondition of industrial unionism.

In practice, however, the NMM looked increasingly towards the TUC and the union executives to bring about industrial unionism.

Thus, a resolution passed by the 1924 TUC, originating from the Minority Movement in the South Wales Miners Federation, instructed the TUC itself to "draw up a scheme of organisation by industry."

Needless to say, the General Council allowed the resolution to remain a dead letter. The minutes of the following year's TUC record the lament of one CPGB member who attended the Congress as a union delegate:

"...Delegates' confusion was made worse and confounded by the General Council not giving any lead whatever. He suggested that the General Council might have done something to resuscitate the enthusiasm which had been engendered in the workshops."

The NMM did not completely transform the proposals for industrial unionism and workshop committees into appeals for implementation by the bureaucracy. In 1926, for example, the NMM press was itself advocating that rank-and-file trade unionists take the initiative in setting up workplace committees.

Even so, there had been a clear drift on the part of the NMM — away from action and initiative at rank-and-file level, and towards appeals for industrial unionism and workshop committees under the patronage of the TUC.

Writing in the CPGB's newspaper in 1926, Hardy merely listed the more militant resolutions passed at the previous year's TUC congress as proof of the positive achievements of the NMM. This was completely at odds with the role originally envisaged for the NMM.

## In the General Strike

THE crucial test for the NMM came in the run-up to the General Strike of May 1926. The conflicting tendencies which had always been apparent in the NMM, and the CPGB, reached a climax.

Organisationally, the NMM survived the General Strike. Politically, the NMM irrevocably turned its back on the revolutionary politics which had inspired its creation. The NMM survived the General Strike in name only.

A special conference of the NMM held in March 1926 agreed upon a plan of action in preparation for the looming General Strike.

Particular emphasis was placed upon the formation of Councils of Action in the localities. Without waiting for the TUC General Council to give a lead, the NMM circulated all Trades Councils with an appeal to call Conferences of Action:

"Conferences of Action (should be convened) for the purpose of setting up Councils of Action under the control and auspices of the Trades and Labour Councils."

The Councils of Action were to bring together representatives from working-class political and trade union organisations, and also from the unemployed workers' movement. Their role was to prepare for taking over the running of essential services during the General Strike.

The NMM conference also advocated the establishment of a Workers' Defence Corps, the formation of workshop committees, and the extension of the Triple Alliance, "with instructions given to the General Council to take over the leadership of the alliance on behalf of the whole working class movement."

In response to the national appeal of the NMM and the work of NMM members in the localities, many Trades Councils did convene Unity of Action Conferences for the purpose of establishing Councils of Action.

During the General Strike these Councils organised mass meetings, produced local strike bulletins, mobilised workers for mass pickets, and, in some areas, established Workers' Defence Corps and took over the control of essential services.

Well over 1,000 CPGB members — some 25% of the organisation's membership — were arrested for their activities during the General Strike. The entire top leadership of the CPGB had already been arrested the previous year and, not by chance, was still in prison at the time of the General Strike.

There can be no doubt about the commitment of members of the NMM and the CPGB to the miners' cause and a working-class victory in the General Strike. The tragedy was that the NMM and the CPGB proved incapable of providing effective leadership during the run-up to the strike and the strike itself.

In 1925 the CPGB had correctly argued that, "the miners' crisis is part of the general economic crisis in British industrialism. It has passed beyond any purely economic stage. It is a definitely political crisis and can only be solved by revolutionary political means."

But by the eve of the General Strike the CPGB had struck a very different note:

"To entertain any exaggerated views as to the revolutionary possibilities of this crisis and visions of a new leadership 'arising spontaneously in the struggle' etc., is fantastic."

This about-turn was equally noticeable in relation to the fake-lefts on the TUC General Council — the bureaucrats who talked left but acted right.

Shortly after the formation of the NMM, J. R. Campbell, a lead-

ing figure in the CPGB, had warned:

"It would be a suicidal policy for the CP and the NMM to place too much reliance on the official left wing. It is the duty of the Party and the NMM to criticise its weakness relentlessly."

In the run-up to the General Strike the political bankruptcy of the fake-lefts became daily more apparent. They did nothing to implement the left-wing resolutions passed by the 1925 TUC Congress, and they made no preparations for the General Strike.

But neither the CPGB nor the NMM set about criticising their weaknesses relentlessly. Instead, they merely complained about the "lack of self-confidence" of the fake-lefts, and urged them to "overcome their weaknesses." They had "acted very foolishly" and needed to show more determination in future.

When the fake-lefts duly betrayed the General Strike, many CPGB members were genuinely confused by the behaviour of "our friends on the General Council." As one CPGB member plaintively asked:

"Why did the better and more virile members of the General Council — those we have called the 'Left Wing' — allow themselves to become involved in their [i.e. the right-wingers'] panic?"


**The Russian revolution was an inspiration. Workers' delegation on board the first Soviet ship to dock in Britain, 1920**

The role envisaged for the Councils of Action who underwent a dramatic transformation between 1925 and 1926.

In 1925, when a General Strike seemed possible in July, the Councils of Action were to take the lead in spreading the strike action, organising mass demonstrations and mass picketing, and fighting for an unofficial general strike.

By 1926, however, the leaders of the NMM and the CPGB were declaring that:

"There should be no rival body to the Trades Council... We should avoid rivalry and recognise the General Council as the General Staff of the unions, directing the unions in the struggle."

The NMM had been set up to fight for the revolutionary transformation of the trade union movement. But less than two years after its creation it was spinning illusions in fake-lefts and calling on workers to fall into line behind the TUC General Council.

## The influence of Stalin

THE reasons for this degeneration lie partly in the significance attached to the maintenance of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee (ARTUC) by the CPGB.

The ARTUC was a bloc between the emerging Stalinist regime in the Soviet Union and the British TUC. Having abandoned any commitment to promoting international socialist revolution, Stalin looked to international diplomacy and alliances with labour movement bureaucracies abroad in order to "protect" the Soviet Union.

The fake-lefts were leading supporters of the ARTUC, formally established in 1925: it boosted their fake-left credentials. The CPGB, as loyal followers of Stalin, was therefore anxious not to alienate the fake-lefts, in case this led to them pulling out of the ARTUC.

But this factor can be only a partial explanation for the degeneration of the NMM.

The NMM and the CPGB had been inconsistent in their attitude towards the union bureaucracy *before* the creation of the ARTUC. Criticism of the union bureaucracy, for example, had been largely confined to the theoretical publications of the CPGB and had been less than prominent in the party's agitational press.

On the other hand, the NMM and the CPGB were criticised by Moscow for their softness towards the bureaucracy even *after* the ARTUC had been set up.

The NMM conference of 1926, for example, held after the defeat of the General Strike, advocated that members restrain criticism of the TUC General Council where it was likely to "militate against the possibilities of bringing the miners' strike to a successful conclusion or operate against the future welfare of Anglo-Russian unity."

This position was sharply rebuked by Moscow. Instead of soft-peddling its criticisms, the NMM should recognise that "merciless criticism and exposure of the manoeuvres of the new consolidated trade union bureaucracy is one of the foremost tasks in the struggle for the revolutionising of the British trade union movement."

How sincere Moscow was in its appeal to revolutionise the British unions is, to put it mildly, open to debate. Clearly, though, there was an internal dynamic to the increasingly erratic course pursued by the NMM in 1925/6.

The shortcomings and eventual degeneration of the NMM were rooted in the failure of the CPGB, the driving political force in the NMM, to overcome the political legacy which it had inherited from its political predecessors.

That legacy was mainly one of propagandism and syndicalism, sometimes accompanied by opportunism. In its early years the CPGB, under the guidance of a genuinely revolutionary movement based in Moscow, had begun to overcome that legacy. The formation of the NMM itself was one manifestation of this.

But the CPGB never completely broke from its political inheritance. Syndicalism remained a force within it, as too did the opportunism of some of its members who had previously belonged to the British Socialist Party.

The CPGB's level of theoretical and political training was insufficient to eradicate such political shortcomings. As J. T. Murphy put it in 1924:

"If I were asked what are the principal defects of the Party today, I would answer unhesitatingly: formalism, organisational fetishism, and lack of political training."

Once the pressure from Moscow ceased to correct the failings of the CPGB — and instead hardened out such failings into a political method — the CPGB and the NMM collapsed into political incoherence.

On the positive side, in its early period, the NMM displayed a real drive to carry the struggle for revolutionary politics into the workers' movement. It did not dismiss the trade unions as reformist, but regarded them as a vital arena of struggle.

And negatively, in terms of its degeneration and eventual demise, the NMM taught an even more valuable lesson: a socialist who lacks a coherent revolutionary world-view is incapable of effective intervention in the trade unions. ■

# The educated bourgeois

By Martin Thomas

JOHN Maynard Keynes, who died 50 years ago this year first came to fame in 1919 with a pamphlet that denounced as unworkable the Allies' plan to make defeated Germany pay huge amounts in compensation for World War 1. He was active not only as an economic theorist but also as a journalist, civil servant and political figure on the fringes of the Liberal Party.

Through his book, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), he fundamentally shifted the terms of orthodox debate on economics.

By the 1920s, orthodox economics had developed a whole theoretical system based on the balancing of supply and demand.

At a very high wage, everyone would be keen to work, but the additional production to be got by hiring an extra worker would not be sufficient to make it worthwhile. At a very low wage, demand for labour would be high but many workers would not consider it worth the trouble. Balance would be reached when the wage was just equal to the additional production got by hiring an extra worker, and just not high enough to persuade the idle and reluctant who remained jobless to offer themselves for work.

For an orthodox economist, therefore, the only possible cause for unemployment (beyond the temporary 'between jobs' type) was wages getting stuck at too high a level. As Keynes put it, such an economist "may sympathise with labour in refusing to accept a cut in its money wage... but scientific integrity forces him to declare that this refusal is, nevertheless, at the root of the trouble".

In fact, most of the economists did not sympathise with labour at all! Their theory was designed to prove that profit was the "natural" reward of capital, and that wages were fixed "naturally" too, so that a fight for better wages could do no good and might even do harm, by causing unemployment.

Their "dismal science" was also designed to prove that governments could do nothing much against unemployment or poverty. When trade unionists demanded better wages or more aid for the jobless, the Treasury would reply: it can't be done! The budget must be balanced! The free market must have its way! Labour governments in 1924 and 1929-31 echoed what the Treasury "experts" told them.

Keynes was no socialist, but he was liberal-minded and instinctively disrespectful of complacent orthodoxy. He argued that unemployment was not caused by high wages, or any other quirk. It was a chronic disease of free-market capitalism.

In the orthodox theory, as Keynes put it, "money makes no real difference except frictionally." It figures only as a convenient token to facilitate exchange, not as a store of value. Keynes looked more closely at the role of money.

He showed that, far from automatically balancing supply and demand, the capitalist free market could, and would, produce unsaleable stocks of goods on one side, and needy people unable to buy those goods for lack of cash on another, while piles of idle cash were held by the rich.

Total market demand is made up by consumption and investment. Investment in machinery and equipment, Keynes argued, is determined by the rate of profit which capitalists expect from that investment.

*"Keynes was a snob in his political views. Against Marxism he wrote: 'How can I adopt a creed which, preferring the mud to the fish, exalts the boorish proletariat above the bourgeois and the intelligentsia...?'"*

That expected profit rate, he thought, was generally low in mature capitalism. (He explained profits as being due to the 'scarcity' of capital: as capital became more plentiful, profits had to decline). At any shock, expectations of profit fall lower still.

Result: a decline in investment. And closely following on that decline will be an increase in the general desire to hold wealth in the form of cash, rather than lending it at interest. The rate of interest will be forced up, worsening the decline of investment by making it harder for entrepreneurs to borrow.

The decline in investment will lead to a much bigger decline in overall effective demand, and therefore in employment, through a process which Keynes called the "multiplier". £1 million less demand for equipment, for example, will mean £1 million less income for workers and capitalists in industry. That in turn will mean less demand for the consumer goods otherwise bought by those people. Suppose they would have spent 80% of the £1 million on consumption, and saved the rest. Then there is a loss of £800,000 in demand for consumer goods.

That in turn means a further £800,000 loss in incomes; and following on from that, yet another loss in demand, £640,000 this time... When the process has worked itself through, then in this example the total loss of demand is £4 million. And there is a corresponding loss of jobs.

Prices and wages chase each other down a spiral. And, with the rich holding on to their cash, the demand for luxuries and for investment goods remains low, too.

There are counteracting factors; but Keynes saw no reason to suppose that they would be enough to push investment up to a level allowing full employment.

"So, failing some novel expedient, there is no answer to the riddle, except that there must be sufficient unemployment to keep us so poor that our consumption falls short of our income by no more than the equivalent of the physical provision for future consumption which it pays to produce today".

What did Keynes propose? A willingness by central banks to increase the supply of cash in times of downturn, and thus to keep the rate of interest low, would help. That would not, however, be enough. The state must undertake additional investment. If it does so, the multiplier works the other way. £1 million extra spent by the state will produce £4 million total boost to demand, and a corresponding boost to employment.

For the state to "overspend" is not therefore folly: in a slump it is the wisest policy. To balance the government budget is folly.

As the "scarcity-value of capital" falls, the state will gradually have to take a commanding role in investment. "A somewhat comprehensive socialisation of investment will prove the only means of securing an approximation to full employment". This would, however, preserve much of capitalism: it would, indeed, be "the only practicable means of avoiding the destruction of existing economic forms in their entirety" by socialism.

Keynes was something of a snob in his political views. Against Marxism he wrote: "How can I adopt a creed which, preferring the mud to the fish, exalts the boorish proletariat above the bourgeois and the intelligentsia...?" Against the Labour Party his chief complaint was the importance within it of "the trade unionists, once the oppressed, now the tyrants, whose selfish and sectional pretensions need to be bravely opposed".

"Ought I, then, to join the Labour Party", he asked himself. "Superficially that is attractive. But looked at closer, there are great difficulties.

"To begin with, it is a class party, and the class is not my class. I can be influenced by

what seems to me to be Justice and good sense; but the class war will find me on the side of the educated bourgeoisie".

Yet the main leaders of the labour movement embraced Keynes's theories eagerly. Here was a respected man of science giving support to the view that wage cuts were not the answer to unemployment, and support to their demands for public spending. Here was an alternative to the assaults of the Tories, free from the horrors of revolutionary socialism.

*"After World War 2, a new bloodless, bowdlerised Keynesianism emerged. The question of falling profits was pushed out of the picture."*

In one sense Keynes was more pessimistic about capitalism than Marx was. Keynes thought capitalism was sinking into a permanent slump, as the rate of profit fell, while Marx argued that capitalism would continue to lurch through booms and slumps as long as the working class did not overthrow it.

Keynes's extreme "pessimism", however, allowed him to conclude that there would be no alternative for the bosses but to accept an increasing role of the state in investment and the "euthanasia of the rentier" — the quiet death of the inactive capitalist who lives off dividends or interest without playing any part in industrial management.

Once the bosses had accepted that, the new state-regulated capitalism would be stable. Thus Keynes transformed his pessimism into optimism.

He complained that "the difficulty is that the capitalist leaders in the City and Parliament are incapable of distinguishing novel measures for safeguarding capitalism from what they call bolshevism", but clearly believed that it was only mental rigidity, not anything more fundamental, which held up the "capitalist leaders" from adopting his "moderately conservative" recommendations.

For Marx, there was no chance that the profiteers would quietly fade away. For Marx, profits are not determined by technology or nature. They are not an index of the "scarcity of capital" (and, in fact, Marx argued, the whole idea of a long-term "scarcity" or "excess" of capital is a confusion).

Profits are determined (within limits — but very broad limits) by the class struggle. If profits fall, the profiteers will try to restore them by cutting wages and speeding up labour. They may succeed. If the workers do not overthrow capitalism, then eventually, backed up by the pressure of mass unemployment on the employed workers, the bosses will succeed.

They will lay the basis for a new boom. In that boom, yet again, the accumulation of capital will lurch ahead of the market and the possibilities of profit-making, and the conditions will be created for another slump. The whole process contains vast complexities — many different factors may be the immediate cause of a slump — and the idea of regulating it smoothly by a careful expansion of state investment is fantasy.

For all that, "Keynesian" policies of increased state spending may indeed "work" in the short run to pull the economy out of slumps. The conditions which lead capitalists to subordinate their interests to a "socialisation of investment" by the state are not, however, those of the liberal regime which Keynes hoped for. The most thorough putting into practice of Keynes's recommendations came not through the bright idealists of the New Deal but through the hard-faced men who administered the war economies of 1939-45. When the labour movement embraced Keynes's theories, it tied itself to the chariot of state capitalism, not socialism.

After World War 2, a new bloodless, bowdlerised Keynesianism emerged. The question of falling profits was pushed out of the picture — in the boom of the 1950s and '60s, it looked as if that could be done safely — and the problem was redefined as one of short-term dips in investment below the level needed for full employment, to be corrected by short-term running adjustments to monetary, tax and state spending policies.

Keynesian economists argued that their policy of adjustments to public spending had made capitalism stable. Events were to indicate that the truth was rather the opposite. More than the Keynesian public spending policies permitting capitalist prosperity, it was the capitalist prosperity permitting the public spending policies.

From the early 1970s, capitalism lurched into stagnation and acute instability because of a general decline in its rates of profit and decrease in the viability of its international trading and financial arrangements.

Now "Keynesian" public spending brought with them a long list of problems for the capitalist state.

Keynes's had always been a theory which took the national economy as its basic unit, in an epoch when capitalism is increasingly an integrated international system. Considerations about foreign trade, capital flows, and so on can easily be added to the Keynesian scheme — and, indeed, Keynes himself was an expert on international trade — but the international framework is an extra factor tacked onto the national unit, rather than being the starting point of analysis.

This flaw took its toll in the 1970s. Profits do not come from the natural "scarcity value" of capital: they are an expression of surplus value, the value produced by labour in excess of the amount paid in wages. Public spending is a deduction from that surplus value, it therefore tends to reduce profits. Capitalist states with high public spending tend to lose out in international competition.

Increased public spending and increased employment strengthen workers' fights for higher wages. In a situation where capitalists are desperately striving to reverse a fall in their profit rates, they generally respond by trying to outstrip the higher wages by higher prices. There is an inflationary spiral. Public spending boosts also push up prices directly. Inflation and low interest rates are liable to lead to balance of payments problems.

"Keynesianism" became discredited in the 1970s. It was ousted by new versions of the old pre-Keynesian dogmas. Yet Keyne's criticism of those dogmas has still not been answered.

## The Black Tower

**Say that the men of the old black tower,**
**Though they but feed as the goatherd feeds,**
**Their money spent, their wine gone sour,**
**Lack nothing that a soldier needs,**
**That all are oath-bound men;**
**Those banners come not in.**

***There in the tomb stand the dead upright,***
***But winds come up from the shore:***
***They shake when the wind roar,***
***Old bones upon the moutain shake.***

**Those banners come to bribe or theaten,**
**Or whisper that a man's a fool**
**Who, when his own right king's forgotten**
**Cares what king sets up his rule.**
**If he died long ago**
**Why do you dread us so?**

***There is the tomb drops the faint moonlight,***
***But wind comes up from the shore:***
***They shake when the winds roar,***
***Old bones upon the mountain shake.***

**The tower's old cook that must climb and clamber**
**Catching small birds in the dew of the morn**
**When we hale men lie stretched in slumber**
**Swears that he hears the king's great horn.**
**But he's a lying hound:**
**Stand we on guard oath-bound!**

**There in the tomb the dark grows blacker,**
**But win comes up from the shore:**
**They shake when the winds roar,**
**Old bones upon the mountain shake.**

***WB Yeats***

# School exclusions not the answer

By Chris Reynolds

**EXCLUSIONS from schools of troublesome children are running at epidemic levels. Between 1990-1 and 1993-4 the number excluded was multiplied almost by four, from 2,910 to 11,181.**

**This wave of exclusions must be linked to the underclass-phobia generated by the insecurity of life in Britain today and promoted by the press, the Tory government, and the Labour front bench. A sizeable section of society, and especially of young people, are now branded as a subhuman "dangerous class."**

**The phobia is not made out of nothing. Many brutalised, alienated young people *are* dangerous. Yet Richard Wilding, the boy excluded from Glaisdale school in Nottingham by NAS-UWT teachers threatening to strike if the local authority appeal decision to reinstate were upheld, is just thirteen years old. What sort of life can you have if you are branded as permanently unfit for ordinary human society at the age of 13?**

**At least one other school already has seen teachers use the strike threat to get a student excluded. Probably more will follow.**

**William Irons (*WL* 31) backed the teachers at Glaisdale, while warning that "without a fight for adequate funding there will be no adequate solution."**

**I am not sure he is right. In my mind as I write is Val Bergin. Val was the "Richard Wilding" of a school I taught at in the early 1970s. Many of the teachers openly hated Val and wanted to get rid of her. Exclusion was not commonplace then, but if it had been mooted then I think only one teacher, myself, would have opposed it root-and-branch.**

**Val did disrupt lessons, and she did bully other students. But she was a vulnerable young girl of twelve. Her attitudes were shaped by the feeling that everyone was against her; and she was not far wrong about that!**

**When she found a teacher who was sympathetic, even an inexperienced, untalented one, in the school only for a short time, namely myself, she eased up noticeably. I still think all the other teachers were wrong about her, and maybe all the teachers at Glaisdale are wrong about Richard Wilding, too.**

**Probably Richard caused far more trouble than Val ever did. Yet shouldn't the first resort, and the first objective for strike action, be to demand more resources within the school to help deal with disruptive students?**

**Val must be 37 years old now. How she has fared, I do not know. I'm sure, however, that it will have been better for her — and her children, if she has any, and everyone round her — if she found some sympathy and care within mainstream education, rather than being excluded from ordinary society while still a child.**

# Survivors

By Dave Donnachie

I THINK that Frank Higgins is way off the mark about *Trainspotting*. According to him, the film "failed to convey the horror and the sure consequences of dependence on hard drugs." Has he seen the film?

A neglected infant dies while its mother and fellow addicts lie around in a stupor. One of the addicts dies in squalor and misery, HIV positive. The necessary stealing in order to obtain the next hit is shown, along with the effects of addiction on the addict's family.

Higgins is right when he points out that the main character, Renton, comes off heroin and then back on it too easily. But I think that he misses the point when he describes this character as a cartoon-like hero, always up and running, no matter what he goes through.

The author, Irvine Welsh, is trying to show there that, despite everything, the people at the bottom, perhaps the most oppressed section in Scotland (what bourgeois sociologists would call the "underclass") are, above all, survivors.

His stories are set in the housing scheme of Muirhouse, in Edinburgh. In the mid-80s the *Sun* launched a campaign to brand Muirhouse the worst housing scheme in Europe. They largely succeeded — it is still common to hear the description of Edinburgh as the "AIDS capital of Europe." The youth unemployment rate is approaching 30%, so it is hardly surprising that some turn to hard drugs in order to escape — but the point is made in the film that alcohol is a drug which is more often abused and thus causes more misery than heroin.

Almost all of the people of Muirhouse are, like Renton, survivors. And that is what Welsh tries, and succeeds, in showing. And it is worth going to see the film if only for the scene in which the Edinburgh Festival is realistically depicted for perhaps the first time — the residents of housing schemes are shown, glum faced and drowning their sorrows, with the caption "First Day of the Edinburgh Festival."

# Relative studies

By Ted Crawford

I WAS interested to read your thought-provoking issue with the open letter to a socialist sympathiser of the IRA and material on the Paris Commune of 125 years ago [*Workers' Liberty* 30]. You cited the passage quoted by Marx in *The Civil War in France* but written by the correspondent of the *London Daily News*. This was in fact by George Crawford, my great-great uncle and I have only just discovered it. *The Civil War*... was only translated into English in 1934 and no member of the family at that time or since was into Marxism or aware that George Morland Crawford was the correspondent in Paris. However, I have drawn this to the attention of the man who is writing up him and his wife (also a correspondent in Paris at the time) for the new *Dictionary of National Biography* and it will appear there in 2004.

Despite the fact that the Apostolic Succession does not apply in revolutionary politics, I feel I can now lift my head up a bit higher in Marxist circles.

# The nations and the Marxists

By Roger Clarke

**COULD the open letter to a socialist sympathiser of the IRA [WL31] be issued as a separate pamphlet? One problem I have found in follow-up discussions is that in Australia our left simply does not understand that Lenin's support for the right of nations to self-determination was a means to assist the voluntary union of nations.**

**People say things like: "You can't have a separate state for every minority group in a nation", in blissful ignorance of the fact that the issue is the right to separate. The sad result of decades of miseducation by the so-called "Leninist" parties!**

**Again, discussing the review "Trotskyism and the Jews" with an ISO member, I found it difficult to get past the idea that Israel was created by "imperialism" — and so deserves to be "smashed."**

**Are you aware of Rosdolsky's study, *Engels and the 'Nonhistoric' Peoples*? It shows that the concept of a counter-revolutionary people can be found in the writings of Engels (and Marx) in 1848.**

**In their works the motivation was not vicarious nationalism, but the fear that some independence movements would assist the Russian Empire against the revolution in Europe. Nevertheless, some of their statements (even in context) are in conflict with the outlook they founded. Rosdolsky concludes his study by quoting Trotsky: "The national policy of Lenin will find its place among the eternal treasures of mankind."**

# The essence of Shachtman

By Tony Dale

PETER Drucker's book *Max Shachtman and his Left* has sparked an ongoing discussion in *Workers' Liberty* over the last year. The debate highlights a number of issues which need addressing if socialists are going to benefit from a balance sheet of Max Shachtman and the Workers' Party/Independent Socialist League tradition. In particular one key question needs answering: what were the distinctive fundamental features which defined the WP/ISL tradition?

Many identify this tradition as Max Shachtman's "bureaucratic collectivist" tendency. This was not the case.

Most WP/ISL members did hold to some variant of the theory that Stalinist Russia was a bureaucratic collectivist society with a new ruling class. This theory helped them advocate a revolutionary socialist approach which was counterposed not only to the capitalist west but also to Stalinist Eastern Europe. In the United States it helped the WP/ISL people view the antics of the Communist Party with a hostile and suspicious eye.

Bureaucratic collectivism may have been the

most well-known theoretical legacy left behind by the WP/ISL but the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism" was not the defining feature of this tradition. If it was then it would only be a semi-religious sect round a theory enshrined as its bible. If "bureaucratic collectivism" was the defining feature there would have been no place in the organisation for revolutionary socialists with other theories. Socialists with both "workers' state" and "state capitalist" theories were members of the WP/ISL. If WP/ISL had been operating in Eastern Europe or in a Stalinist USA then the theory of "bureaucratic collectivism" would have been more fundamental and crucial as it would have been central in determining the day to day activity and propaganda of the WP/ISL.

The Workers' Party did not see the 1940 split with the American Socialist Workers' Party as inevitable due to the clash between "workers' state" and "bureaucratic collectivist" theories. There were divergent positions on world events flowing from the two theories but the Workers' Party did not see two organisations as inevitable due to these differences. In fact from 1945 up to 1948 the Workers' Party were willing to be a "bureaucratic collectivist" minority inside a reunited democratic but "workers' state" organisation. The groups did not reunite, due to Cannon's hostility and his unwillingness to make any concessions to the Workers' Party.

The Workers' Party did not see the contrasting views on the Stalinist states as the fundamental difference between itself and the SWP. "Every revolutionist must understand that in a certain sense the difference of opinion on the character of the revolutionary party as manifested in this question is more important, and certainly not less important, than the differences of opinion between us and the Cannonites on such questions as the character of the Russian state, the role of the national question in the class struggle today, trade union tactics and the like.

"We have been of the opinion for six years that the split in the Trotskyist movement in the United States was due not to us but to the bureaucratic and politically reactionary position of the Cannonite faction."

What type of revolutionary party did Max Shachtman and the Workers' Party want? "We are for an all-inclusive party in the revolutionary Marxist sense, in the Bolshevik sense, in the Trotskyist sense. That is to say, we are for a party which allows for the existence of different tendencies within the general framework of a revolutionary Marxism. The Bolshevik Party, throughout the period when it was a Bolshevik party, was distinguished, among other things, by precisely this feature. That is also a feature of our Workers' Party as its practice has shown.

"The Workers' Party and the Independent Socialist League were built as democratic collectives of activists, not a 'bureaucratic party' (where) leadership is composed of a handful of the all-wise and all-powerful, resting upon a clique of sycophants and blind followers in the ranks."

In the eyes of the Workers' Party, why was unity with the SWP not possible? "The only obstacle was the monolithic conception of the party held by the Cannonites."

The other distinctive programmatic point which marked out the day to day work of the WP/ISL was the call for a Labour Party in the United States. "We are handicapped primarily by the fact that we do not operate within a *politically-organised working class*. That is point A, B, C and all the other letters down to Z... In *our* time mass parties, generally speaking, came out of mass parties. That is, the revolutionary mass movements (Communist Parties) came out of already-existing mass working-class political movements (old Social Democratic Parties)... our main political concentration, our main political slogan, the struggle to break the proletariat from bourgeois politics and to set it on the road of class politics — revolves around the fight for an independent labor party... The formation of such a party would offer our party an exceptional and highly fruitful proletarian arena in which to advance and fight for our programme and in the course of this fight to build the genuine revolutionary party."

All the above extracts come from documents by Max Shachtman in the 1940s when he was unquestionably a revolutionary Marxist. The WP/ISL is often viewed merely as a "bureaucratic collectivist" tendency. It would be more accurate to see the Workers' Party and Independent Socialist League as revolutionary socialists organised around a distinctive conception of "Leninism" and a strategy of campaigning for the US workers' movement to form a labour party.

# The Republicans are different

By D.R. O'Connor Lysaght

IN reply to John McAnulty, Sean Matgamna has suggested that the opposition of Socialist Democracy [formerly the Irish Committee for a Marxist Programme] to fêting the Loyalist assassin Hutchinson stems merely from a prejudice in favour of Nationalist para-militaries, particularly the IRA.

Now, Socialist Democracy *does* see the IRA as different in kind from its Loyalist opposite numbers. This is because it considers militant Republican aims, if not methods, democratic, whereas those of the UVF and UDA are not. However, this is not the only reason. Socialist Democracy is willing to talk to socialists who believe in maintaining Irish partition, however mistaken we may consider them. Our objection to Hutchinson is not that he once killed people for his cause, but that he continues to consort with and defend sectarian murderers, members of a body whose only strategy is one of the murder of Catholics as Catholics and which reserves the right to do this again. Though the Republican para-militaries have killed Protestants on the same basis (and we have condemned them for so doing), such acts have been exceptional to and in contradiction of their strategy. They are for democracy, the Loyalists for Protestant ascendancy.

Were Billy Hutchinson sincere about his socialism, he would break with the PUP and its UVF connections. As it is, we can say only that those socialists who are so ready to give him a platform (and, hence, credibility) are, for all the anti-Stalinism of some, taking a position frighteningly close to that of Stalin when he pacted with Hitler. Don't expect us to keep silent about it.

## PS

ONE omission from my rebuttal of Sean Matgamna [*Workers' Liberty* 31] renders part of it unintelligible. Page 36, column 1, lines 47-49 should read (omissions underlined): "...and he is accurate. Since the first Home Rule Bill of 1886, the Unionists had represented *British finance capital as well as landlordism, reflecting* the intertwined nature of the two."

# National rights

By Jim Denham

JOHN McAnulty takes great exception to *Workers' Liberty*'s supposed "misrepresentation", "assertion" and "slander" on the subject of Ireland. He advocates, instead, "serious debate" and proceeds to demonstrate what he means by accusing us of revisionism, and evisceration (no less!) of Marxism, and of seeking to "legitimise Loyalism."

It is, perhaps worth recalling the initial cause of this particular example of serious debate from comrade McAnulty: a dispute over whether or not *Workers' Liberty* had the right to publish a letter from one Billy Hutchinson, a leader of the Progressive Unionist Party. Hutchinson is a self-styled "socialist" who had — and maybe still has — links with the Loyalist paramilitaries of the UVF, and who served a jail sentence for murder in the '70s.

Whether Hutchinson's "socialism" is genuine (or, indeed, worthy of the name) is certainly open to debate. Hutchinson may be a fraud or even some sort of "Strasserite" [a "left-wing" Nazi]. I honestly don't know and, so far, Comrade McAnulty has produced no evidence to back up his assertion that Hutchinson is part of the far right. What is a matter of record is that the PUP adopted a far more conciliatory attitude than the two mainstream Unionist parties during the ceasefire and has expressed a willingness to enter into dialogue with nationalists, including Sinn Fein. So why does McAnulty want to 'no-platform' him?

To judge by McAnulty's contribution to *Workers' Liberty* 31, the answer to this conundrum has little or nothing to do with the genuineness or otherwise of Hutchinson's socialist credentials: it is because he (Hutchinson) is a Loyalist. And in the struggle for "democratic rights in Ireland, including the right to self-determination... the Loyalists have stood firmly on the other side of the barricade in alliance with imperialism."

So there we have it: Hutchinson's real crime is that he wants to retain the link with the UK. This makes him (together with about 90% of the Protestant working class in the Six Counties) a "vicious unofficial auxiliary" of British imperialism.

One has to ask whether Comrade McAnulty is in favour of *any* dialogue with *any* Protestant who has not first completely disavowed his or her heritage?

Space does not allow me to go into McAnulty's bizarre apologia for Provisional IRA and INLA atrocities ("such atrocities fly in the face of the programme of the movement") except to say that such a "contradiction" might well be lost upon the victims, and ask McAnulty a not entirely rhetorical question: for Marxists (and genuine, Wolfe Tone, Republicans) doesn't that make such actions *more*, not *less*, obscene?

Nor is there space here to dwell upon McAnulty's crude sloganising about British imperialism explaining everything worth knowing about the last 25 years of history in the North. Suffice, for now, to note that if the North is a "British colony" then quite clearly the profit motive is no longer the central driving force of British capitalism. And if the ability to thwart the designs of the imperialist power is the mark of the true anti-imperialist, then the Loyalists have been the most effective anti-imperialist force in the whole of Ireland for at least the last 30 years. Remember the 1974 General Strike?

But this is all rather trivial, point-scoring stuff and I'd much rather concentrate upon the central theme of McAnulty's piece: his evident contempt for consistent democracy and for the rights of national minorities. "Do you assert a right of all national minorities to separate or is this a unique right of unionism?" he asks. Our answer (as anyone with even a passing familiarity with our politics must surely know) is "Yes, we do and no, it isn't." Support for the right of distinct peoples (not just scholastically defined "nations") to determine their own future is axiomatic for Leninists. And the right to self-determination is indivisible, or it means nothing: a people may exercise self-determination in a manner that we wouldn't advocate, but that cannot invalidate their rights in the matter. Thus we plainly state that the Loyalist/Unionist community has the right to separation if it wants it — but has no right to oppress Catholics within the predominantly Protestant areas.

McAnulty objects that "all nations have minorities and if they all had the right of secession there would be no development of nations in the first place. Would this right of separation apply to nationalists within the North? Could we have a crazy patchwork of communities, all with rights of separation?" To me, that sounds like a pretty powerful argument against the separation of the 26 Counties from Britain. But, seriously, since when have modern-day revolutionaries held any brief for the integrity of the nation state? If one single point sums up Lenin on the national question — in contrast, say, to the Austrian Marxists — it is this: utter rejection of the idea that the socialist working class has *any* concern, or anything but contempt for the integrity of states. Re-read Lenin, John!

We don't *advocate* a "crazy patchwork of communities", but if that is the alternative to the oppression of national minorities, then so be it. There is a long history of former colonies achieving independence and then going on to oppress their own minorities. McAnulty seems blissfully indifferent to it.

A common thread runs through McAnulty's objections to even talking to the likes of Hutchinson: contempt for the rights of the Protestants and identification of Loyalism with British imperialism. The Irish bourgeois revolution has yet to be completed and the primary task of socialists is presently to join forces with "revolutionary nationalists" to accomplish that task. The main enemy is British imperialism, whose agents are the Protestant working class! The "process" (eh?) of "Permanent Revolution" will ensure that the national struggle flows over into socialist revolution and the militant opposition of one million working-class people in the North will somehow disappear.

We at *Workers' Liberty* reject such sectarian mysticism and prefer to base ourselves upon the best traditions of Wolfe Tone Republicanism and Marxism. Our prime teacher here is Lenin. The 1920 Theses of the Comintern on the National and Colonial Question said this: "The entire policy of the Communist International on the national and colonial question must be based primarily on bringing together the proletariat and working classes of all nations and countries for the common revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landowners and the bourgeoisie. For only such united action will ensure victory over capitalism, without which it is impossible to abolish national oppression and inequality of rights."

We're a long way from that in Ireland at the moment. But talking to Protestant workers and their representatives is at least a start.

## As we were saying:

# For a workers' government!

THE last Labour government was a bosses' government. We need a workers' government.

British society is rotting and decaying all around us, and the Tory government is now deliberately acting as a demolition squad.

It is because they hope that it will help them in these aims that the Tories are so ready to tolerate and increase unemployment and the massive destruction of the social fabric that accompanies it.

Labour in office prepared the way for Thatcher. Not just in the obvious sense that Healey and Callaghan introduced their own savage cuts in 1976 and 1977, but by its thoroughgoing failure to regenerate industry and British society.

*What the ruling class learned from that experience was the insufficiency of even a relatively successful* [in their terms] *Labour government.*

They needed to make the sort of attacks Labour could not make without shattering its base. Thus Thatcherism.

The time for patching is long past — and in any case it is in the working class interest not to patch but to transform and bring about fundamental change towards democratic working class socialism — that irreversible change in the balance of wealth and power that the 1974 manifesto tantalisingly talked about and Labour in power forgot all about.

We must replace the fundamental mechanism of capitalism — profit — with a new one: the needs of the working people, fulfilled in a society organised, owned collectively, and run democratically by the working class.

Whether or not the next Labour government — in 1984, or earlier if we do as we have the industrial strength to do and kick out Thatcher — will be a more or less radical new instalment of the sort of Labour governments we have had this century, will be determined by two things:

- By whether a real attack is made on the wealth and entrenched power of the ruling class; and
- By whether or not it rests at least in part on the organisations of the working class instead of on those of the state bureaucracy, the military, and Parliament.

The working class itself would only serve and protect its own interests by organising itself outside the rhythms, norms and constraints of Parliamentary politics, expanding its factory shop stewards' committees, combine committees, Trades Councils, etc., and creating new Action committees, to be an industrial power that could if necessary dispense with the Parliamentarians.

The Brighton/Blackpool [Labour Party Conference] decisions to control MPs and to give the majority of votes on who shall be Prime Minister if Labour has a majority in Parliament to the CLPs and trade unions could open the way (if we are not cheated) to a new kind of 'Labour' government — a workers' government, instead of a government of the trade union party which merely administers capitalism according to capitalism's own laws.

Revolutionary Marxists believe that there must be a socialist revolution — a clean sweep of the capitalists, and the establishment of the state power of the working class, leading to the setting up of a workers' democracy. The big majority of the labour movement don't yet share our views. But we have a common need and determination to oppose and fight the Tory government and to oppose any moves, even by the Labour Party in government, to load the cost of capitalist decay and crisis onto the shoulders of the working class.

If we cannot agree on a root-and-branch transformation (or on precisely how to go about getting it), we can at least agree on a whole range of measures to protect ourselves and to cut down and control the capitalists.

Whoever wants to break out of the limits defined by the interests of the capitalists must be prepared to disarm the ruling class and destroy its state. Only the working class can do that, organised in squads like those which the flying pickets organise, which can arm themselves when necessary.

Any Parliament-based government that attempted really radical change would put its head on the block, and while the present armed forces exist the axe is in the hands of the bourgeoisie.

The power of the ruling class is not entirely, nor even essentially, in Parliament. That is the terrain to which they now go out from their redoubts in industry, the Civil Service and the armed forces, to meet and to parley with the labour movement, and to put on a show for the people.

But if the labour movement insists on new rules for the parleying game, they have a reserve language to resort to — force. So have we.

*Neither the ruling class nor the working class can afford to muddle along indefinitely — or for much longer.*

In the last decade and a half, the working class has defeated successive attempts by Wilson and Heath to solve British capitalism's crisis and decay at our expense. We even [1974] drove Heath from office.

The tragedy is that, while strong enough industrially to stop their solutions, we have not been politically able to develop a thoroughgoing working-class solution.

A solution to the decay and crisis must be found, and it will either be theirs, or ours — that is, working-class reconstruction of society on a socialist basis.

The drive to clinch the decisions on Labour democracy is the centre of the struggle now. Unless the Labour Party is thoroughly democratised, talking about it now as a vehicle for struggle and change is as absurd as calling for the Labour Party to come 'to power with socialist policies' was in the '60s and '70s. The Blackpool [Labour Party Conference] decisions must be consolidated, extended, *and made to work.* And no Labour democracy can be secure unless the trade unions are democratised. The rank and file militants in the unions must be organised.

But if we do not simultaneously organise a drive for the minimally necessary socialist policies, then the consequences of democratisation may well be very unlike what the left expects.

[A purge] is a serious possibility unless we step up the drive to arm the movement — or at least big sections of its rank and file — with socialist politics.

***Socialist Organiser* 29, 21 October 1980**

# The artist as revolutionary

James D Young reviews 'CLR James: a political biography' by Kent Worcester (State University of New York Press, 1996)

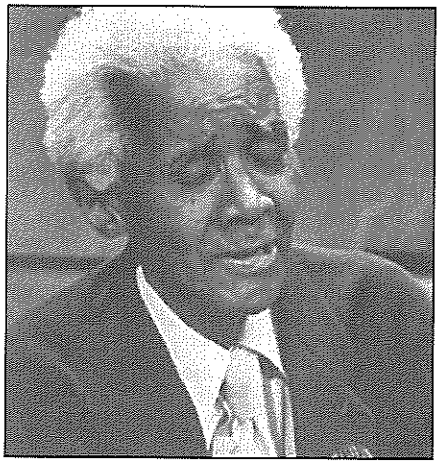
AS a result of the pioneering work of Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: the History of Black People in Britain* (1984) and the biography of James by Paul Buhle *The Artist as a Revolutionary* (1988), the space was opened up in the teeth of the Euro-centric cultural domination of the Marxism of the Frankfurt School and the *New Left Review* for a reappraisal of the life and times of Cyril Lionel Robert James. Moreover, the most interesting aspect of the new context that helped to stimulate the revival of interest in the life and work of James was the anti-imperialist cultural critiques developed by such diverse writers and literary critics of the left as the Palestinian Edward W Said and the Kenyan African Ngugi Wa Thiong'O.

While they were all clearing away the accumulated ideological rubbish and debris which concealed the critical importance of James's many-dimensional contribution to internationalist socialist though, scholars like Buhle, Anna Grimshaw and Kent Worcester were gathering in the vast harvest of the very scattered writings of the man described by the *Times* newspaper in London as "the Black Plato" of our century. By reconstructing James's political biography and life and times during "a bitterly disappointing century", from a socialist-humanist standpoint, Worcester has written a stimulating, workmanlike and often perceptive book.

Though he belongs to a generation of socialists who have come to political consciousness during a period of comparative defeat for the democratic left, Worcester possesses several advantages that my generation of socialist writers did not enjoy. He understands in a way that was not sufficiently appreciated in the past that the process of interpreting the world from a socialist viewpoint is a critical aspect of the struggle to change the world from the bottom up.

When I met Raya Dunayevskaya, who was one of Trotsky's secretaries in the 1930s, in 1958 she said: "it is easy to write good history books and biographies when the proletariat is chalking up victories." I was not convinced of that in 1959; I am sure now that she was wrong.

Ironically, it may actually be easier in some ways to write good socialist biography in the teeth of the counter-revolution: the biographer must be very critical, detached and analytical. Worcester succeeds very admirably in being critical, analytical and detached, though the inevitable price that he pays for a certain detachment from an admittedly dwindling international constituency, is the unavoidable inability to produce a biography with the inspirational exhortation that coloured some of the pages of James' book *The Black Jacobins* (1938) and Dunayevskaya's *Marxism and Freedom* (1958).



Observing that the young James was not driven or motivated by the desire for money or fame, Worcester has understood the importance of his subject's formative experiences at Queen's Royal College in Port of Spain within a West Indian family context of ambitious grandparents. At an early age knew that he was destined to make his mark on the world; and during his non-'political' years of the 1920s before he ended up in London in 1932, James was already a writer who had had several short stories published in influential magazines.

The vast expansion of western universities after the Second World War would play a critical role in defining James as a 'culturalist' or cultural critic. Workers' movements were increasingly separated from their status outside bourgeois civil society. Narrow academic specialisation of history and the social sciences accompanied by estrangement from early 20th-century socialist workers' idealism and capacity for struggle and self-sacrifice opened up the space for a new elite of scholars.

Edward Said is justified in saying that 'the technocrats' of the new world order are "competent to solve local problems, not to ask the big questions set by the grand narratives of emancipation and enlightenment." The biggest bonus of Worcester's impressive biography is that it allows the reader to see how a major socialist thinker developed in response to the unique challenges of his own times.

When the young West Indian came to London in 1932 to help Leonie Constantine to write his book *Cricket and I*, James was much more interested in imaginative literature than in politics. Dealing with James's hectic life, including his "love life" in England between 1932 and 1938, when he went to America, Worcester is an excellent guide to the James who lived, worked, loved and agitated in the United States until his deportation during the McCarthyite hysteria in 1953. Sensitive to James the speaker, agitator and producer of large internal documents inside small groups like the Socialist Workers Party and the Workers Party, on the "Negro question", the "woman question" etc, Worcester is at his best in uncovering these buried treasures.

He devotes attention to the novel *Mintey Alley* that James brought to England in 1932. Completed in the West Indies by the mid-1920s, it was published only in 1936. Focusing on the important books researched and written during this period — *World Revolution*, *The Black Jacobins*, *A History of Negro Revolt* etc — Worcester writes well and perceptively. However, in paying insufficient attention to James in England between 1932 and 1938, he has not grasped the importance of the old-fashioned and non-specialised literary criticism that James developed in the West Indies.

Unique among revolutionary socialists of his generation, James was always willing to interrogate, listen, and probe into the daily lives of working people and peasants. The fact that he was a short story writer and novelist before he became a politico was the key to what he was about as a socialist. It explained his irrepressible belief in the capacity of working people to create socialism from below. But although his spell in England was the most narrowly political phase in his long life, James had not abandoned his interest in imaginative literature.

Capturing an important truth about James in the expressive phrase "the artist as revolutionary", Buhle's insight might have been more carefully considered by Worcester. Not even Franz Mehring's excellent book *The Lessing Legend* (New York 1938) could compare with the brilliant literary criticism that James developed in America in his articles on Richard Wright and Norman Mailer in the *New International* and the *Fourth International* and others between 1940 and 1950.

Worcester is particularly good on the Johnson-Forrest tendency; and he acknowledges the important role played by Raya Dunayevskaya and Grace Lee in allowing James to develop his critical intellectual style and comprehensive critique of world capitalism, including the new state capitalism in the Soviet Union without soviets. Worcester is not at all uncritical of the role James played in the Caribbean in the 1960s, but he provides a brilliant defence against the savage caricature of the 'Black Plato' in VS Naipaul's quasi-autobiographical book *A Way in the World* (1994).As the left beings to re-build itself out of the chaos of the capitalist new world order, the example of James will be there. A prefigurative figure of the better socialist world to come — unless humankind succumbs to barbarism — his spirit reminds us men make their own history — even during a period of sloth and reaction.

By helping to rescue the memory of a major historian of the left, Worcester has put us all in his debt. ■

# The left alternative in Australia?

Roger Clarke reviews 'Beyond Labor and Liberal', edited by Robert Leach

THIS book investigates the possibility of forming a centre-left Australian alliance as an alternative to both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party. The need for such an alliance is attributed to the globalisation of capital, which has undermined the compromise between white, male labour and national capital in Australia. The new order of global capitalism will continue to oppress women and indigenous peoples, while no longer needing to compromise with the unions. All those excluded by the new world order therefore need to form a broad alliance. The New Zealand Alliance, formed in 1991, now includes New Labour (a left split from the NZ Labour Party), Mana Motuhake (Maori sovereignty), Greens, Democrats (formerly Social Credit) and Liberals (a small split from the National Party). The NZ Alliance is given as an example of what might be achieved in Australia.

According to the editor, the proposed alliance implies a restructuring of the Australian left: "In order to have an Alliance of parties, there must be parties to ally with. The first step must be the organisation of a single, democratic party of the labour left." Leach then asserts: "The ALP Socialist Left, unlike those in NZ, will not leave the ALP despite all the defeats, insults and policy reversals that the ALP right heaps upon them." This (clairvoyant?) forecast reduces the proposed left party to being an amalgamation of individuals and groups who have already retired hurt from the fight for socialist ideas within the ALP.

Penelope Whitney's chapter on the NZ Alliance contains some useful information on the formation of the New Labour Party. The NZ Labour left also suffered defeats and insults, but they did not meekly give up: "In 1987, Anderton [the future New Labour leader] established the Economic Policy Network (EPN). Through mailings from his office, and network meetings before party conferences, the EPN challenged Labour's positioning towards the right and debated alternatives. It defended public ownership, progressive taxation, and government intervention in the economy, with a major goal of full employment." The EPN, renamed the Labour Policy Network (LPN), became an unofficial faction within the NZ Labour Party.

Even when he was suspended from the Labour caucus for refusing to vote for the sale of the Bank of NZ, Anderton still did not resign. Party policy was opposed to asset sales and Anderton successfully argued that his suspension for defending party policy was unconstitutional. When he did leave (in 1989) it was after consultation with other activists, prompted by plummeting membership: "Anderton held a series of meetings throughout the country with people in the Labour Party, mainly in the LPN. 'He asked us, do we stay or go?', recalls Matt Robson, current NLP president. The majority felt they had no option but to leave."

The New Labour Party, formed within a month of Anderton's announcement of his resignation, is therefore the product of a determined struggle within the old Labour Party. Unfortunately, the Australian contributors to this book show little interest in conducting a similar struggle within the ALP. How then will a "single, democratic party of the labour left" emerge?

*"Unfortunately, the contributors show little interest in conducting a struggle within the ALP"*

The most plausible answer is given by Howard Guille — it will emerge with the support of unions not affiliated to the ALP. Yet Guille himself is not convinced: "there is a very strong culture within unions that, however bad the ALP becomes, the other side is even worse". This culture is persuasive, Guille argues, "because of the absence of any progressive alternative". We are left with the perspective of forming another trade union based party, when the ALP does finally become indistinguishable from the Liberals. Reasonable enough as a contingency plan for the future; useless as a guide to action now.

Frank Stillwell revisits the attempt, initiated by the self-dissolved Communist Party of Australia and beginning in 1989, to construct a New Left Party. The NLP was wound up in 1992 and replaced by Left Connection, a loose "network" rather than a party. Stillwell's post-mortem attributes to the NLP a break with democratic centralism [interpreted as being incompatible with openness and tolerance] in favour of "postmodernist politics emphasising diversity, decentralisation and difference." But the constitution of the New Left Party declared membership of any other political party, after a trial period, to be incompatible with membership of the NLP. Another NLP limit on postmodernist diversity is hinted at by Stillwell's claim that some of the social movements "have direct experience of the adverse effects of entrism by the trotskyist sects".

Jim Falk discusses the genuinely postmodernist Rainbow Alliance, which was formed in 1987 as a "multi-issue political movement" rather than a political party. The Rainbow Alliance hoped to "reshape the context within which the various political parties acted and reacted". Again there is a post-mortem on why these hopes were not realised. Falk claims the labour movement has lost its potential to envisage an alternative society. His reasons are: "market principles have by now infiltrated and gained ideological ascendancy in the political process in which the unions engage" and "the unions find themselves in a fairly desperate struggle for long-term survival, in which anything beyond immediate concerns must take second place". These are compelling reasons for socialists to combine ideological class struggle with participation in the battle for the immediate concerns of the trade unions. Here they are offered as reasons for abandoning the labour movement. Independent socialist Phil Cleary contradicts Leach's dictum that an alliance must be an alliance of parties. "For now, I don't believe that the alternative is a new party. In the short term, an Alliance of independents, or of independents and Greens, is more feasible". Similarly, Drew Hutton of the Greens pursues the idea of an alliance between the Democrats and Greens — an alliance of parties, but without the left-wing party that Leach says must be formed as a first step. In both of these variants, the Alliance would be composed entirely of individuals or parties who are not answerable to any specifically working class organisations.

The Australian Democrats quite explicitly do not identify with the struggle of organised labour against capital. Democrat leader Cheryl Kernot and Tony Walters write: "While the Democrats do not subscribe to much of the left's rhetoric on the dichotomy between capital and labour, we do share many of Leach's concerns with the processes and outcomes of economic rationalist ideology." Their chapter discusses the unsuccessful negotiations with the Greens for an electoral alliance. Kernot and Walters are unfazed; they claim that the Democrats are the already existing green-progressive alternative to Labor and the Liberals.

This anti-climactic conclusion is a result of the way the questions of a new party and alliances are posed in this book. For many of the contributors, the purpose of an alliance is just to be vaguely "progressive"; the participation of a working class party in the alliance is seen as desirable, but not essential. Therefore, as a call to action, the book is unconvincing. Possibly the book was intended simply as a survey of centre-left responses to the idea of an Australian alliance; if so, the survey would have been more informative if the ALP Socialist Left and other organised socialist groups had been offered an opportunity to speak for themselves.

# *Marxism*
# The unity of opposites

Part five of Edward Conze's explanation of dialectical materialism*

**Class struggle and class harmony**

IT is very useful, although unpopular, to study in this light the opposition between *class struggle* and *class harmony*. We have two trends of opinion with regard to it. The one denies the class struggle, the other denies the class harmony. Both are wrong and unscientific. The class struggle is a fact, is an event which is observed day by day in industry and in politics. It can be denied only by those for whom the denial of the class struggle is one of the strongest weapons in carrying on the class struggle, and by those elements of the intelligentsia who have lost contact with real life.

But the class struggle is not the only fact in present-day society. There are many aspects of real class harmony.

How is it possible that the class struggle should exist alongside a certain amount of peace and harmony between the classes? The unscientific mind sticks to the view that opposites, in this case class struggle and class harmony, are incompatible and cannot exist side by side. Nevertheless, in a family, man and wife may agree about the food, but at the same time they may quarrel about the temperature of the room or whether they should go to the zoo or to the cinema. Family quarrels do not necessarily exclude a certain amount of family harmony.

The capitalists of the different countries compete internationally with each other and in that competition use weapons ranging from tariffs to battleships. When, however, the workers in any country rise against the capitalists in that country, *all* the capitalists (home and foreign) are in harmony — witness their attitude to Soviet Russia in the first years.

Class struggle and class harmony do not exclude one another, but exist side by side. Two classes struggle when they *disagree* on certain points. The main bone of contention between the two classes of our capitalist society is the division of the product of labour. Class harmony means that two classes *agree* on certain points. Now do the workers find certain points of agreement with the capitalists?

They obviously do. The Jubilee showed a point of agreement in the spontaneous response of the masses who surprised everybody by their loyalty to the same king whom the bankers and capitalists maintain in power. The last war, while it did not end the struggle for wages and profits, found the masses in fundamental agreement with their capitalists. If they had not considered this war to be their war, no power on earth could not have got them into their trenches. Nationalism, the tribal instincts, bind the classes together and provide a common point of agreement.

The Saar gave us another formidable point of the reality which class harmony can have in certain circumstances. In spite of the prospects of an all-round economic loss, in spite of the prospect of a reign of terror, 90% of the votes of this mainly industrial district were cast for Hitler and for its return to Germany.

Ardent revolutionaries, opposed to the Government's air-raid precautions, have assured me — strictly in private — that in air raids they should like to be protected. This desire at least they share with their worst enemies. A certain measure of agreement is also reached in the question of "collective security", of which both socialists and Tories have spoken with so much eloquence. According to some, however, these socialists are "reformists" and "traitors." Well, the proletariat of Russia find certain points of agreement with the capitalists of France. Both desire that the *status quo* in Europe should be maintained. Both desire that the French capitalist and imperialist Government should re-arm. A Soviet Government communiqué issued on May 16th, 1935 said: "In this connection Stalin understands and fully approves the national defence policy carried out by France to maintain her armed forces at the level necessary to her security."

In Britain one of the most important points of agreement is the common material interest of both classes in imperialist exploitation of the colonies, in the profits from which both classes take a share. Therefore it needs no special "treason" on the part of any leaders, but merely a "commonsense" — although short-sighted — view of their own immediate interests, to induce the majority of the working class to fight for the Empire if necessary. *This will go on, until we can show a practicable way to a high standard of life which is not based on the exploitation of natives, but on the socialist organisation of society.* The same fact is at the basis of the large Tory vote of the working class. If Lancashire has voted Tory, this cannot be explained by any special stupidity on the part of the Lancashire workers. The prosperity of the cotton trade is too obviously bound up with India's domination in India. We can sever this harmony between the classes in Lancashire only when we can show them a *practicable* way to a socialist society.

A socialist Britain will no longer protect the usurers and the foreign and native capitalists who have drained the Indian peasant of his resources and have ruined the Indian market. Its alliance with the Indian people will extend immediately the purchasing power of the Indian market. By raising the standard of life in this country, socialism will extend the British internal market to a considerable extent. Millions of workers will leave the Tories if we can show them a practicable way to this socialist society.

The rise of fascism also is based on an element of class harmony. When in Italy and Germany, after repeated attacks, the working class proved itself unable, in the existing circumstances, to get control of and manage society by itself, the costs of the fierce class struggle became so great that many people wished it to end at any price. This gave fascism its opportunity.

The more intense the class struggle becomes, the more clearly are the workers conscious of its existence. The views of the workers on political subjects are partly due to their education — and there is much scope for improvement in that direction. But the workers' views are not entirely due to wrong education. They also reflect — imperfectly and to a limited extent only — the facts as they are. Why do the workers sometimes "fall for" the swindle of capitalist propaganda, and why do they, at other times, not let the capitalists "get away with it"? Because the workers are sometimes more enlightened and sometimes less? What enlightens them? The realities of the situation. In fact, I think that the workers' views are not so entirely out of touch with reality as some enthusiastic supporters of the working class like to assume.

In accordance with the second law of our scientific method we must, of course, study the proportion between class harmony and class struggle in the process of movement and development. The proportion is varying continually. Sometimes the class struggle is more intense, sometimes less.

After 1900 the Labour Party was set up because socialist propaganda had had successes. Why did it become more successful just at that time? Because from that time onward the real wages of the British workers began to fall. The objective weight of the element of class struggle in English society increased and this new fact was reflected in a new consciousness.

Only under exceptional circumstances does the class struggle push the class harmony completely into the background. Then a revolution results. Only after the Russian workers and peasants felt that there was nothing more to hope for from the bourgeoisie and the aristocrats, only after these classes were completely bankrupt, did the workers and peasants listen to Bolshevist propaganda. The Russians' greater class consciousness was, therefore, in the first place

* This explanation of dialectical materialism was written in the mid-'30s.

due to changed objective circumstances, and not to Bolshevist propaganda, of which they took little notice before the circumstances had altered.

It is quite obvious that in our general propaganda we must stress again and again the element of class struggle in our society. We must counteract the dope by which the capitalist press and orthodox education attempt to make the worker forget the class struggle. At the same time we should never lose sight of the aspects of class harmony in our present-day society. Some socialists are too much inclined to "explain" by declamations against "betrayal by leaders", facts which are only the reflection of a real and existing class harmony.

**Centralisation and decentralisation**

IN centralisation and decentralisation we have two opposites which are of supreme importance for all problems of social life. Where lies their unity?

In their forecast of events to come a number of otherwise perspicacious persons, especially in the Liberal camp, saw only the centralising forces in the economic system of the 20th century. They believed that the creation of a world market and the imperialist expansion of the big nations would eventually lead to an international and peaceful unification and order of world society. They are disappointed by the orgy of nationalism which is still spreading. They are inclined to regard it as an outcome of human stupidity rather than of economic necessity. What happened was that they overlooked the equally strong and even stronger decentralising forces operating in the economic system at the time, in the opposite direction. High tariff walls more and more shut off the nations from one another. The rivalry for markets, colonies and spheres of influence bred antagonisms among the big nations. The last war was a consequence of the decentralising forces. So is the new war which all governments of the world are preparing for at enormous expense.

A similar problem appears in the domestic sphere. Socialist planning is the most urgent task of this generation. Successful planning cannot be done without an idea of how to achieve the unity of, or the balance between, centralisation and decentralisation.

There exists a conception of planning according to which the control of banks, factories, land and mines is to be vested in one central authority. In the name of efficiency, both state capitalism and state socialism strive for this goal. Efficiency, however, comes into conflict with liberty. In a totally unified society, in a "totalitarian" state, the workers by hand and by brain are divested of effective power. They are crushed by the enormous power of the centralised state. Their minds are in danger of being degraded to mere gramophone records of the ideas of men in central power. Liberty of thought and freedom of action must disappear. If, under the present system, you displease your employer, you may, in many cases, find another one. Rigid central control of the means of production leaves you with one employer only. The one employer can squeeze all dignity out of the life of his subjects. He can break any backbone that does not bend to him.

The dialectical law of the "unity of opposites" prepares us for a solution of this difficulty. While unifying and concentrating economic power, we must at the same time aim at doing the opposite, *i.e.* disperse and distribute it. The two opposite lines of action appear to exclude one another. They must be made to include each other if we want to get a satisfactory result. The central authority of the planned state needs a counterbalance. Mere parliamentary democracy offers no counterweight, for the formidable power of the central bureaucracy will render powerless an inchoate and scattered electorate. Decentralisation must be organised if it wants to prevail against the organisation of the State. Our conception of socialism would, I think, gain by an infiltration from syndicalism. Movements to this effect are familiar in England under the name of "Guild Socialism" and "Workers' Control."

*"While unifying and concentrating economic power, we must at the same time aim at doing the opposite, i.e. disperse and distribute it."*

I personally think the term "Workers' Control" to be too vague and rather misleading.

The term "workers' control" *may* convey something definite to the expert politician. The average person will hesitate as to its exact meaning. Does the term mean a direct control by the workers or a control through their representatives only? Is it full control by the workers or only partial control? Are the technicians included in the term "workers" or not? If not, the slogan "workers' control" is harmful. If they are included, why create misunderstandings in the minds of those who are not accustomed to thinking of the technicians as "workers"? Further, are the technicians to be regarded as equal partners with the workers, or as an element that needs subordination to the workers, as in Russia?

I would thus prefer to speak of "councils of technical and manual workers." These councils should be regarded as decentralised bodies operating in the places of production, powerful because elected on an occupational instead of a geographical basis. As much authority should be assigned to them as is just compatible with co-ordination and planning.

Britain in this respect presents the great advantage of having always enjoyed a healthier balance between centralisation and decentralisation than Germany, France and Russia with their age-long bureaucracy. In 1859 John Stuart Mill wrote about the "melancholy condition of the Russian Empire. The Czar himself is powerless against the bureaucratic body; he can send any of them to Siberia, but he cannot govern without them, or against their will." Bureaucratism thus appears to be one of those handicaps with which the bolshevists started, and not a creation of their own.

**What is democratic control of the means of production?**

WHAT do we mean when we speak of the "democratic control" of the means of production? Control by parliament alone does not solve the problems of the workers. In Britain the Post Office has made that clear to everybody. In Germany, Bismarck understood this point so well that he established parliamentary control of the Post Office, railways, and Central Bank, as a bulwark against socialism. Also, bureaucratic control cannot help the workers. If Civil Servants, instead of the present owners, run industry, there is no reason why they should take much notice of the claims of the workers.

The workers are now exploited for no other reason than that they are deprived of any effective share in the control of the factories. We are thus led to the conclusion — unpleasant perhaps to some persons — that the workers will stop being exploited only after they have themselves taken control of the management of industry. The question of greater income is inseparably linked up with the question of greater economic power, which can come only from the ownership and control of the means whereby we live. Ownership, however, involves responsibility. If the workers shun the responsibility, the ownership also will slip out of their hands. Their participation in the control and management of industry should be as direct as possible. "Workers' control" is, in fact, the very essence of socialism, as G.D.H. Cole has so frequently explained.

We can easily solve the hard problems of the future if we dare to release the enormous creative energies which slumber in the working class. In Russia we have been able to witness the creative drive of which the working-class people are capable.

The Labour Movement already possesses, as one of its most valuable assets, the experience in administrative work that its councillors have acquired in local government, that its co-operative members have obtained in the management of the co-operative societies, and that its trade union officials have got from their perpetual fight for the standard of living of the workers. And, what is more, the vast majority of these trained persons have remained members of the class from which they came. This movement must, I think, be broadened.

A growing section inside the Labour Party assumes that the initiative of the rank and file might be fostered, and effective workers' control might be prepared, by the organisation of "councils of manual and technical workers" in the places of production. I cannot discuss here the merits of this scheme. It seems to me to be, in the main, a step in the right direction, because it takes notice of

*The ABCs: 4*

# What was the USSR?

By Colin Foster

FOR 60 years, almost everyone (from right to left) saw the USSR and its replicas in Eastern Europe as the "actually existing" (albeit, maybe, deformed, bureaucratised, and mangled) embodiments of socialism. Yet in 1989-91 they were rejected by the workers with almost unanimous hatred.

Was the system really socialist or even any approach to socialism? Was it even, as most Trotskyists argued while calling for the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucrats, a "degenerated workers' state"?

We believe not. Even before the collapse of East European Stalinism in 1989, a number of facts were unmistakable.

1. The position of the working class in the command economies was generally worse than in the market economies. Low rents and food prices, and fairly full employment, did make the poorest in the Eastern Bloc better off than in the West. Yet average working-class living standards were lower, even at the same level of general industrial development.

Work conditions, despite the sluggish pace of work in many Eastern Bloc factories much of the time, were worse. *And the ruling bureaucracies repressed all independent organisation by the working class.*

South Korea is a society based on ruthless exploitation and brutal repression: yet it has allowed some openings for trade unions to develop against the odds. North Korea has allowed no such openings. The contrast between the two Koreas reflects the general picture.

And this is not an extraordinary situation of acute short-term crisis — as the position in the USSR in the '30s could perhaps be viewed at the time. It is a stable pattern over 40, 50 or 60 years.

The command economies built up large and powerful working classes, working classes which have shown tremendous socialist potential. In that sense they created preconditions for socialism. But in their repression of the working class they were further away from socialism than many market economies.

2. The command economies were not a stage beyond capitalism in developing the productive forces. They emerged from underdeveloped capitalist societies with a big load of pre-capitalist or colonialist dross, and did broadly — and less efficiently — the same work as capitalist development.

Some command economies developed industry fast. But — since 1945 — so have many market economies. The command economies could show no general, clear superiority over the market economies in developing the forces of production.

A co-operative commonwealth — a nationalised economy planned under workers' democracy — will produce more efficiently and distribute more equally than any market economy ever can. But when industry is owned not in common, but by a bureaucratic ruling class, then we have instead what Marxists condemned 40 years before Stalinism as "so-called state socialism... which... unites in a single hand the power of economic exploitation and of political oppression."

3. Outside the USSR, the ruling bureaucracies were not usurpers of the nationalised economies; they created them. They did not create them because mass pressure forced them to do so against their will. They created them according to their own wishes and designs.

The bureaucracies were not acutely unstable. For 40 to 50 years they were stably self-reproducing organisms, *ruling classes*.

Trotsky spoke of the Kremlin bureaucracy as balancing between its social and economic base and the pressure of capitalist imperialism. Such a view was no longer tenable after World War 2.

The USSR became the second world power. In Vietnam, China and elsewhere the bureaucratised revolutionary forces were able to defeat the old order and beat

down the working class simultaneously. Even while they were revolutionary against the old order, they were simultaneously counter-revolutionary against the working class.

4. The USSR did not correspond exactly to Lenin's picture of imperialism in his 1916 pamphlet. But then neither does any other country today. Today we commonly use the world "imperialism" in a wider sense than did Lenin. In the broader sense of the word "imperialism", the US, Britain etc are imperialist — and so was the USSR.

To deny that the USSR was imperialist would be to deny the existence of the Athenian and Roman, the Spanish and Ottoman empires, or indeed of the British Empire for all but a few decades of its 300 year life.

The conflict between the US and the USSR was chiefly about competition for spheres of influence and control, rather than a dispute of market economy versus nationalised economy.

*The Eastern Bloc states were exploiting economies essentially parallel, as regards the development of the forces of production, to market capitalism.* We did not consider them progressive. We oppose the process of conversion to free-market economics now under way in the ex-USSR and Eastern Europe, not in the name of saving or restoring the old order, but in the name of the programme we advocated against the old regimes.

- Disbandment of the police and armed forces, and their replacement by a people's militia.
- Breaking up the bureaucratic hierarchy of administration and replacing it with a democratic regime of councils of elected and recallable workers' delegates, with freedom to form many political parties.
- Workers' control in industry. Free trade unions.
- Abolition of bureaucratic privileges; reorganisation of the economy according to a democratically-decided plan.
- Abolition of the bureaucracy's monopoly over information; freedom for working-class newspapers, meetings, radio and TV stations, etc.

## Conze continued

the fact that never has a big change been effected in history without the mass of the people themselves coming into motion.

Socialism will take a decisive step forward if the average worker learns to envisage the coming change as one in which he himself has to take a very active part. At present the workers are in the habit of assuming that "the other man will know." Many are prepared to do their job, but few like to shoulder the responsibility for it. Instead of the habit of obedience, and of looking for a lead, a greater confidence in their power and ability must be established in the minds of the ordinary "rank-and-file" workers. The great appear to us as great because we are on our knees. Why shouldn't we get up?

Dialectical materialism can help us to see problems of this kind more clearly than we should perhaps see them without it. Their solution can be effected in practice only by a delicate adjustment of "machinery." Theory, however, can guide practice and throw light on its path. If we fail to devote thought and active preparation to these problems, we may jump from the present anarchy into the slavery of a planned serf state. We must organise the democratic control of industry from below, if we do not want to tumble into a dictatorship.

# Ideas for freedom

# Workers' Liberty '96

**Three days of socialist discussion and debate hosted by *Workers' Liberty* magazine**

Friday 28 to Sunday 30 June '96 in North London


## Details

▲ Starts at 3.30 on **Friday 28 June**. Ends at 4.45 on **Sunday 30 June.**

▲ Held at Caxton House, 129 St John's Way, London N19 (Archway tube).

▲ There is a professionally staffed creche, a bar and a cafe.

▲ Accommodation and transport are available.

**More details: phone Mark on 0171-639 7965.**

### *Getting your ticket*

**TICKETS ARE CHEAPER BEFORE THE EVENT**

***Tickets for the three days, bought now, cost:***

- ☐ **£8 (unwaged and FE students)**
- ☐ **£12 (students and low-waged)**
- ☐ **£17 (waged).**

**WEEKEND ONLY tickets are £6/£10/£15**

**ONE DAY tickets are £4/£5/£7**

***To get your ticket send a cheque or postal order (payable to "WL Publications") to WL96, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.***

**Price £1.20/60p (UK)**
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## Socialists and Ireland

**Prof Henry Patterson of the University of Ulster discusses the politics of the IRA-Sinn Fein.**

**Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party, Republican speakers and Sean Matgamna of *Workers' Liberty* discuss the prospects for peace and workers' unity.**

**(These discussions will take place on Saturday 29 June)**

### Friday 28 June

WOMEN'S LIBERATION
Cathy Nugent on **Is feminism out of date?** Jean Lane recalls **Women Against Pit Closures** Jill Mountford speaks on **Women and defence of the Welfare State**

INTRODUCING MARXISM
A socialist response to crime **Why are Marxists atheists?**

EXTRA SESSIONS Revolutionary politics of Rosa Luxemburg **Tom Willis on England's revolutionary tradition** Politics of sci-fi **Babeuf and the beginnings of the socialist tradition**

### Saturday 29 June

DEBATES Steve Coote of the Gay Business Association and Anita Goldsmith on **Lesbian and gay liberation** Anarchism or Marxism?

WOMEN'S LIBERATION Louise Regan on **Socialist feminism and other feminisms** Alison Brown on **How women won the vote**

INTRODUCING MARXISM
Are humans naturally greedy? **Is workers' revolution possible?** What will socialism be like? **How are workers exploited?** What makes a union bureaucrat tick?

EDUCATION Pete Radcliff on **The development of comprehensive education** Forum on **'Inclusive Education'**

EXTRA SESSIONS Martin Durham on **Abortion and the US Christian right** The fight for reforms – the experience of the Second International **Labour government or workers' government?** The unions and the employers' offensive **Boom and slump since World War 2** The politics of Euro '96 **Do animals have rights?** Jim Denham on **Pros and cons of the Western canon**

### Sunday 30 June

DEBATES With the student right on **Free education**

INTRODUCING MARXISM
What do we mean by democracy? **Violence, pacifism and war – a socialist response**

EXTRA SESSIONS Dreyfus case **William Morris** Israel after the elections **How the Welfare State was built** Report from the American Labor Party Advocates conference **BSE and baby milk – can we trust the scientists?** Workers and the British cinema